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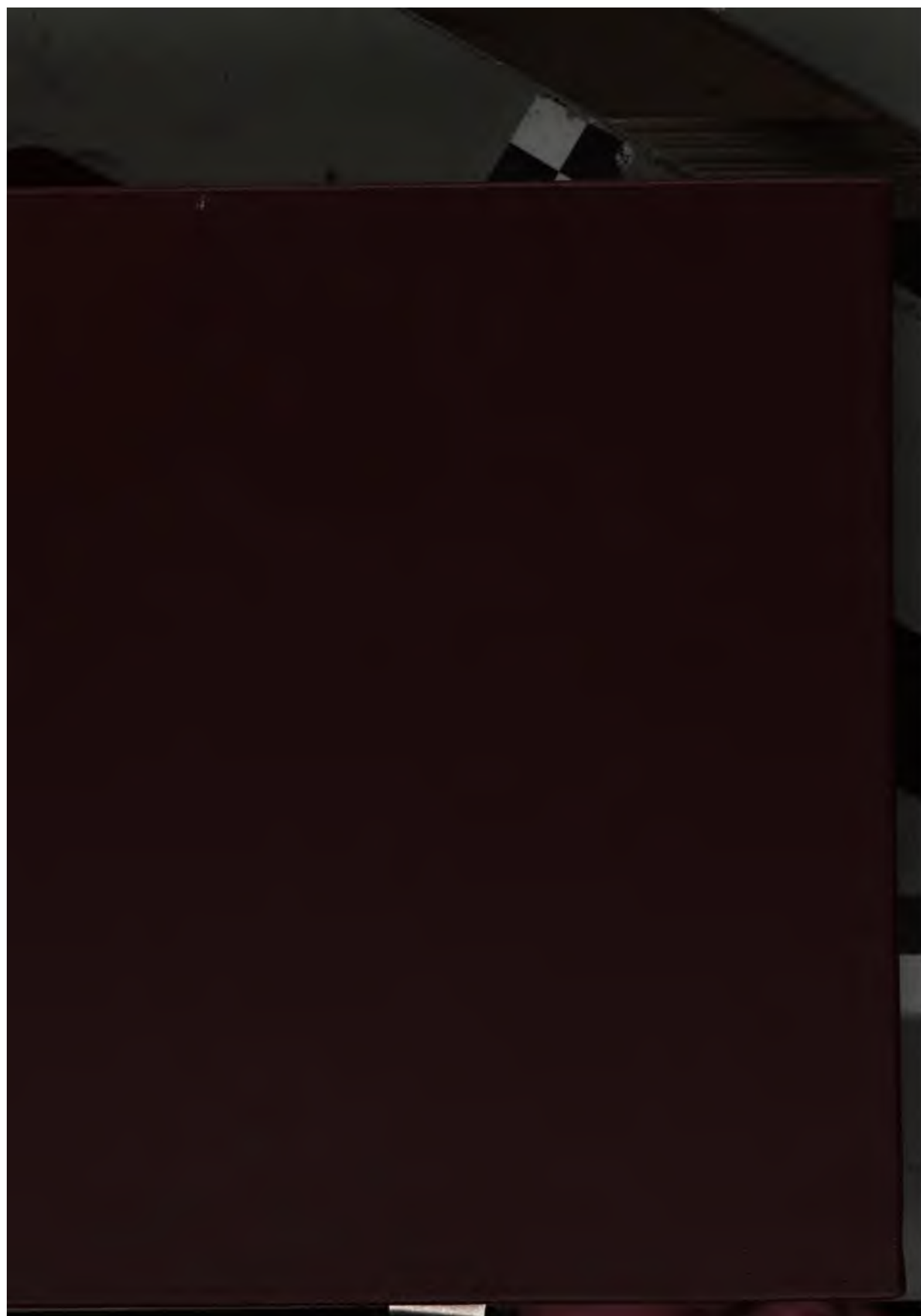
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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
(CLASS OF 1882)
OF NEW YORK

1918

Mrs Elizabeth Ferguson
from

Amelia E. Barr

September 8th / 97

135



THE KING'S HIGHWAY.

Alma Morrison

November Fir

Nineteen Hundred

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CHRISTIAN:

Apollyon, beware what you do, for I am in the King's Highway, the way of holiness; therefore take heed to yourself.

APOLLYON:

Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said: "I am void of fear in this matter."

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS: John Bunyan.

THE
KING'S HIGHWAY

BY

AMELIA E. BARR.



NEW YORK:
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY.

1897.

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BY LOUIS KLOPSCH.

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JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

THIS NOVEL
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
To my Dear Friend,
MRS. LOUIS KLOPSCH.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE LOOSE SCREW	1
II MATRIMONIAL PLANS	19
III JESSIE'S AFFAIRS	42
IV A STRANGE DINNER PARTY	63
V MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE	92
VI "WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE?"	119
VII STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY	144
VIII "I MUST SEE JESSIE"	176
IX JESSIE'S AMBITION AND NICHOLAS LLOYD'S FAILURE	201
X A GREAT VICTORY	228
XI STEVE IS WANTED	254
XII THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE	278
XIII CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY	299
XIV JESSIE'S HARD LESSON	315
XV COMING BACK	331
XVI "THY KINGDOM COME"	352





THE KING'S HIGHWAY

CHAPTER I

THE LOOSE SCREW

IF the mere accumulation of money be a good thing, then Nicholas Lloyd had accomplished something on which he might congratulate himself. He was certainly a rich man. Without being either good, or wise, or great, he had overcome the world; that is, he had broken into its treasure-houses, and helped himself to gold and silver, to houses and lands, and to whatsoever represents the wealth for which so many men give their lives and lose their souls.

This struggle had left indelible marks on the man, both physical and spiritual; and he was mutilated body and soul, though he knew it not. Indeed, he was rather proud of his cold, unruffled mien, and of that hardness of heart and head which no game of Wall Street could intoxicate. Thoroughly American, he had the genius of those great financial operations which move the world; but he saw all love, all merit,

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

all goodness through the coldness of his own nature. He was without enthusiasm, he had schemes instead of passions, and those who knew him best found it easy to believe that he, at least, was made out of the dust of the earth.

He stood one morning in June at an open window of his country house. The roses were blowing in the garden, the cows browsing in the wet meadows beyond; the keen salt air of the sea was in his nostrils, the sweet babbling of the linnet in his ears; but he was conscious of none of these things. His thoughts were of dingy dollars, and what heart he had was full of an angry ache; for his domestic affairs had not prospered to his liking, and the only son, for whom he had planned so much, and so ambitiously, was a perpetual care and disappointment.

He had not seen him for months, and he had resolved to put him out of his mind; and yet, at the beginning of the day, when he needed every faculty fresh for his business, this unfortunate lad would intrude himself among his speculations. So he turned impatiently from the window, and rang the bell to hurry forward his cup of coffee. As he did so, his daughter Alice entered the room.

"I am afraid we are late this morning, father," she said. "Mother is not well; she will not

THE LOOSE SCREW

come down; so I will give you your breakfast at once."

"Yes, you are eight minutes late. The timetable is beyond a woman's comprehension. I want only a cup of coffee, Alice; my stomach has gone wrong, and refuses to be comforted. I was thinking of Stephen — have you heard of him lately?"

"Yes. He came home last night."

"In what condition?"

"Well, and as happy as a bird."

"And without a cent, or a decent garment?"

"I think it very likely."

"And I began my life in that condition, and Stephen sees and knows what I have brought out of nothing. It is incredible! God never made a bigger fool."

"Does God make all the fools? And do clever, prosperous men make themselves, father?"

"Alice, don't talk nonsense."

"But Stephen is not a fool. He took high honours at his college, and has a noble heart beneath his soiled coat."

"I am not talking about his heart. His heart is well enough at home; but a man's heart can't make money for him. He shut his ledger five years ago and left Wall Street in a passion. He said then, he would be happy if he could



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

study art; and I finally consented. What is the result? He has abandoned the studio, just as he abandoned the office."

"Why not? He found out that he had made a mistake. He says now, that if all the pictures in the world were destroyed they would be little missed. Hills, woods, and all the beauties of land and sea would still remain. Why then should Stephen spend his life in making poor pictures of them? I think he will yet become a very wise and admirable man."

"He may — but it is very improbable."

"It is very improbable — but he may," and she smiled confidently into the face of the improbability.

Lloyd did not answer; the horses were stamping impatiently at the open door, and he, at least, comprehended the time-table. With some hurry he went away; and Alice watched the carriage out of sight, and then returned to the breakfast table. Her face was thoughtful, her manner expectant; she was evidently waiting for some person, or event. The situation, however, did not ruffle her; she had the composure of a goddess, a charming young face, eyes with long lashes, and luminous as those of a child, and the kind, simple heart that never grows old.

It was this fresh, faithful heart that inspired

THE LOOSE SCREW

her; genius she did not possess. Little womanly traits made her still more attractive; she was proud of her college; she carried Horace in her pocket, and considered herself to be "strong-minded," being quite unconscious that she was really the veriest sentimentalist. In clothing herself she had a natural gift; and though her costumes were never easily remembered, they always did credit to her dressmaker.

This morning, as she sat crumbling her bread to her sombre thoughts, no one would have noticed her gown particularly: it was simply all that was proper for the occasion; but few would have been indifferent to the general air of freshness that added charm and lustre to her loveliness. It might have come from her dress, but it seemed to be a part of herself. And yet, for a special and noble purpose, she had that morning taken great pains with her toilet, for her brother — whom she dearly loved — was to be influenced by it.

He came lounging into the room ten minutes after his father's departure; and he had probably been waiting for that event. Alice stood up as he entered; then she went to meet him, putting both her hands in his hands, and lifting her fair face to one tanned by every wind of heaven.

"Oh, Steve!" she cried softly; "how nice you do look! I have been waiting breakfast

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

for you. Sit down, dear. It is so good to see you once more."

"I am glad you waited, Alice. I do not mind eating a fanciful meal with you; but I did not feel able for father, so early in the day. A dispute at dinner may be borne; but disagreeable words in the morning give me an indigestion—yes, dear, I will, of course, take sweet-breads; and how spicy that coffee smells!"

He was a tall, strong, well-made man, with wonderful eyes—eyes of heroic form, dark and lustrous, with full lids, and long lashes. No one would have denied his beauty, many would have called him handsome; and his chin fully redeemed his wilful face, for it was of fine mold, and quite unblunted by the animal passions of human nature. And Alice at least knew well what a true, loving heart he had, though it did not stir readily to other hearts; its glow and motion answering best to the mighty voices of Nature,—to the winds, the cries and songs of wild creatures, and the murmur and roar of the ocean. Evidently Stephen Lloyd was a soul astray in the luxurious home of the wealthy financier; he ought to have been in a frontier hut, or on a sailing ship far away to the north, with every stitch of canvas set, and the green seas flying over her cross-trees.

Such as he was, however, Alice dearly loved

THE LOOSE SCREW

him. He troubled his mother, he angered his father, and disappointed all the hopes that had been centred on him; but Alice loved him. She fought his home battle continually; she would not suffer him to be forgotten, and she did really prevent his falling many degrees lower than he had done. For she sent him money; and money is often salvation. The mammon of unrighteousness has a savour of life, as well as a savour of death.

It was the first topic of their conversation. "I was hard up, Alice, when I got that last hundred dollars," he said. "It made me grossly rich. It gave me a glorious spring, my dear sister."

"Tell me about it. You were in Denver, I think?"

"Yes; I had just come from my winter quarters in Arizona. I was dead broke, and I wanted to get to New York in time for my summer plans."

"What are they?"

"I will go to sea for a few months—perhaps on one of the big 'liners.' I am a good man before the mast; or I can turn myself into a waiter, and serve tables."

"Oh, Steve! With your education, is there nothing better that you can do. You know father will—"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Dear Alice, father's plans for me have been discussed to the last letter. I will not get money as he does. I will work for every dollar I put in my pocket—so much labour for so much money."

"Father works with his brains; brain work is as real a thing as hand work."

"We need not discuss that question. My brains are not working brains; they won't keep accounts, they won't plot and scheme; they can't teach, they refuse to recognize any monetary symbol,—the click of wires, and the roar and babble of Broadway and Wall Street, distract them. The woods and the sea, and even the Arizonian desert, talk sensibly to me. I can work with my hands, I can stand at the wheel of a ship, I can guide a reaper, I can drive cattle, or do any sensible thing that a man's brains order him to do with his two hands. I can't sell things that have no existence. I can't work with intangible figments of thought. I want to see and handle my work. Such as I am, I am. I was made so."

"But even the work you see and handle does not always induce you to labour."

"Generally speaking, little girl, I do as much work as is necessary. Now and then I get into a tight place, or I feel a sense of hurry, and write to you for help; and bless your sweet

THE LOOSE SCREW

heart! I always get it." He laid down his knife and fork, and looked at her with a face radiant with affection; and Alice went to his side, and put her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

"This time," he continued, "I was in a hurry. I could have come East with some horses, and got a free passage and a mouthful; but I suddenly got seasick,—I mean, sick for the sea,—and the thought of its great free spaces haunted me day and night, and I heard the roar and murmur of the waves wherever I turned. I hear them now. I am going to-day to look for a summer berth, where I may be free of all they can give me."

"Steve, if you love the sea so much, why not go into the navy? A naval officer is very respectable."

"You dear little ignoramus. Have you been as far as Vassar without divining how much naval officers pay for their respectability? What study! What limitations! What obedience! What unceasing attention to details! Thank you, dear, for the compliment; but whatever could I do on a man-of-war? I, who am only a wayfarer, a bird of passage, who would perish if my wings were cut!"

"Have some more coffee, Steve, and some rice cakes?"

"Yes, I will. I am going to tell you a



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

strange thing, Alice. I have found some very old friends of father's; indeed, they are related to us, though not very intimately, — the families intermarried a generation ago, and there has been a friendship extending backward through many generations. But these are evil times for loving-kindness in any form; everything wears it away."

"Where did you meet these people? Are they nice?"

"I met them in New York. I have been staying a week with them."

"How long since?"

"I left them yesterday — very sorry to do so — but —"

"You have been a week in New York! You never let me know! And you never came to see me! Oh, Steve, how could you!"

"I saw you at Nora Leffert's marriage. You looked as sweet and lovely as a rose. You were the loveliest girl there."

"How could you see me? Surely, you were not there?"

Steve laughed heartily at the question. "I was not there," he answered, "though Nora and I are old friends. I read about the marriage in the newspapers, and I was sure you would be present. I had a great longing to see you, so I strolled up Broadway as far as the church, and

THE LOOSE SCREW

I had my reward. It is n't many fellows that can boast of a sister so good and beautiful and loving as you are, sweet Alice."

"Steve, I can return the compliment, very truly. It is n't many girls that can boast of a brother so handsome, and so good, and so loving, as you are. Don't contradict me; you are handsome, when you are well dressed, as you are this morning; you are good, as far as you understand what goodness means; and nobody knows better than I do how loving and true you are."

"Don't you think I understand what goodness means?"

"Mother says you do not. If you did, she is sure you would think of others before yourself. You know her idea is, that until we bury self entirely, we are still subject to evil."

"Who can bury self entirely?" asked Steve, a little crossly. "I think mother expects too much. She measures people by too high a standard. When I saw you at the wedding, John McAslin was with me. He saw you, also."

"I suppose John McAslin is one of the family with whom you stayed a week?" she asked.

"Yes. John is the eldest child, and the only son. There are two girls, — beauties, both of them, if I understand what beauty means, — and a father and mother. Now I am going to



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

surprise you. The mother ought to have been our mother. Father was engaged to her for four years. She was making her wedding clothes when she heard of his marriage."

"Oh, what a strange, dreadful thing!"

"It is a common tragedy enough. Mercifully, women forgive and forget, and learn to love again. If they did not, this world would be a broken-hearted kind of a place."

"How did you find all this out?"

"I heard them talking of Senstone Valley, and I said I had a schoolmate who came from there, a lad called Lloyd. And Mrs. McAslin's face instantly lighted, and she began to wonder if he was Nicholas Lloyd's son, and to speak of father, of his fine appearance, and his cleverness, and his marriage with the rich Marian Valliante, and of his present great wealth and influence. And I understood the whole story of her love and desertion, though she never said a word about it. It was Flora McAslin, the eldest daughter, who told me that chapter of father's history, and it was Jessie McAslin that said she was right glad her mother did not marry such a selfish, bad man as Nicholas Lloyd; she thought her dear old papa, with his thousand dollars per annum, a great deal the finer gentleman."

"Perhaps Jessie McAslin does not know

THE LOOSE SCREW

father well enough to make comparisons; and you have not told me yet how you became acquainted with this critical young lady."

"Don't judge until you know all the facts in the case, Alice; it would not be like you. Jessie McAslin is not critical, she has the kindest heart. I met her brother John in the train just outside of Chicago. We sat together, and we talked together until we reached New York. It was in the morning, and I was a little jaded and hungry, and John asked me to what hotel I was going. I told him I never went to hotels. He asked if I were going home, and I answered, 'I have no home.' Then he put his arm through mine and said, 'Go home with me.'"

"It is your own fault, if you have no home, Steve."

"Perhaps—and perhaps not. That isn't the question, now. I went home with John McAslin."

"In what part of New York is his home?" she asked.

"On the East Side, in some nice little flats near St. Mark's Place. I dare say you never heard of the locality. There was no one present when we entered but Mrs. McAslin. She adores her son, and she made me welcome as his friend. A good breakfast was soon ready

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

for us, and then she sent us to bed. When I woke up I heard pleasant voices and the noise of cups and saucers. John had already risen. I made myself as respectable as possible,—I had bought this suit in Chicago,—and, guided by the sound of the conversation, soon reached the little dining-room. Father and mother, brother and sisters, were eating dinner together, and they made a place for me. A few hearty words and a smile from Jessie—by whose side I found a chair—set me at ease, and I'll vow I never ate a better or a more cheerful meal. Is that enough of the McAslins?"

"No. I wish to hear all about them. How did you spend the evening? What can you say about the family?"

"I will answer your last question; the other is of little importance. The father is a clerk in an importing house; not clever, not ambitious, but fond of his home and family,—one of those rare men who are cheerful at six o'clock in the morning, and who have a child's capacity for small, fleeting joys."

"And a little, insignificant-looking man, I suppose?"

"Yes—no—I can't say. I should recognise him if we met, but—"

"You cannot describe him. Then he is certainly a man of no force."

THE LOOSE SCREW

"I should not like to hazard that opinion, Alice. I think a blow in the right place would smite fire from him. The mother is a pleasant, domestic woman. She does not fret herself, or others; she has no fads, no vanity, no littleness of any kind. She has been a beauty. Flora is like her."

"Pray, then, what is Flora like?"

"She has a sweet, calm, innocent face. She is a dressmaker, and is going to marry one of Tiffany's working jewellers. They think it a good match. Flora will not come into any one's life now—but the working jeweller's—she is that kind of a girl. Jessie is different."

"I can see that Jessie is your favourite. How does she differ?"

"Every way. Jessie is small and witchy. She has bright, piercing eyes, and curly brown hair. There is no hesitancy in anything she says or does. Her voice is clear, and has the ring of sincerity. She is a hard-headed, soft-hearted mite, mistress of herself, and very lady-like. That is Jessie McAslin as I saw her. She is her brother's favourite, and she is mine. If I could ever think of a wife, Jessie would be my sweetest dream."

"Why not Jessie, then?"

"Impossible—utterly and finally impossible!"



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

I must not talk of her. I must not even think of her."

"Is the brother like Jessie?"

"No one is like Jessie," said Steve to his sister. "John has her pluck and fibre, and one feels that he is made of superfine blood and iron, and betters it with a noble spirit. But Jessie is fair and John is dark. Jessie is small, and John is tall. Jessie is more piquant than beautiful; John is handsome as the morning and cheerful as light. I was once complaining of my fate. I said, 'I had been born under evil stars,' and John answered, 'No matter what stars we are born under, Steve, they all tell us to look up. For if we did not come into this world to better ourselves, we might as well have stayed where we were.' I tell you, Alice, those words went into my heart. I shall never complain of my stars again. John ought to be a preacher."

"What is he?" Alice asked.

"A student of law—a writer of essays—a newspaper scribbler—a man fighting the world with his pen, until his tongue is armed for the conflict. But when the law has furnished him with weapons, he will be a grand pleader. I would be willing to get into a net of circumstantial evidence, just to watch John pull it all to pieces."

THE LOOSE SCREW

"I think he must be the most interesting of this wonderful family. I should like to see John McAslin."

"I would not have you run into such danger, Alice."

She laughed uneasily, being embarrassed by the boldness of her own desire. So she put an end to the conversation by rising from the table. "Mother does not like you to smoke, Steve. She says smoking is the first vice, drinking the second. I did not say a word last night of your arrival," Alice continued, "for had she known you were in the house, it would have been impossible for her to sleep."

"Poor little mother! I wish she had a better son! Does she go out much now?"

"Less and less."

"I am sorry. I think she makes a mistake. One should not go through the world with closed eyes."

"But if angels lead you, what then? And mother finds it best to shut her eyes to so much."

"I know; I saw father in the park a few days ago. He was with a very gay party. I won't tell you who composed it. Money flies in such company; and father counts his money so carefully. It is a wonder to me!"

"And you are a wonder to him. And so it



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

is—few of us understand those whom we ought most of all to know.”

They were going hand in hand up the wide, polished stairway, and they spoke in very low tones. As Stephen drew near to his mother, a marked change came over him. The kindly bravado of his manner to Alice disappeared; and the white feather of personal shame was very evidently tinging his love and longing with a certain reluctance. He hesitated at the closed door; if Alice had not been at his side, he would have retreated. She watched him enter; then she turned backward, for she knew that these two souls needed no interpreter. Indeed, he was barely within the room ere she heard the sweet, half-veiled tones of welcome—tones like a caress.

“Oh, Steve! Steve! Oh, my boy! My dear boy!”

CHAPTER II

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

WHAT passed between the mother and son remained secret. Steve came downstairs with humid eyes, and an air of gloom that was almost sullen. This air, however, was only the veil he assumed in order to hide his unusual mood; for his mother had a wonderful influence over him, though it was no more practical than her own piety. For Marian Lloyd was a mystic in the largest sense of the word. She dwelt with this Spirit of the Cloud in a constant sense of a spiritual world, which surrounded and might at any moment claim her.

Really, her soul was naturally full of mystic flashes, native and sweet, and far beyond her own endeavour; and therefore, as soon as she realised the falseness of earthly love, and the vanity of earthly desires, she had turned wholly to things invisible—to the Father of Spirits, with whom there is no variableness; to pleasures immortal, and beyond the touch of disappointment. And yet her intense realisation of that great spiritual force—which any man or woman

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

may lay hold of by faith, and make their own—came not by any intellectual process of theology; it was the power and fervour of the indwelling soul, burning within, and developing that sixth sense by which we see "things invisible."

Still, a life is beautiful and fit just in proportion as it fits its duties and environments. Marian Lloyd did not perceive that the finest materials for religious happiness and spiritual growth were at her fireside, among her family affections and her home duties. She desired to obtain a condition "above the meanness of fear and the selfishness of hope;" but she forgot that she was lawfully bound to those who might be influenced for good, by her fears and hopes; she forgot that the heart has two great powers,—the power of prayer and the power of loving,—and that the more homely one gives glory to the higher—makes for it wings, and teaches it those singing, shining omnipotent words that reach the ear of the Ineffable One.

Something of this condition of affairs was divined by Steve; though he had far too large a reverence for his mother to voice plainly his opinion. He went into the quiet garden, and paced up and down the gravelled walks, and communed with his own heart in a way that was far from bringing him stillness, or peace. In fact, he was glad when he saw Alice coming

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

towards him. Her white dress fell in soft folds to her feet; she had a white parasol over her uncovered head; and he said to himself: "She is straight, and white, and pure as a lily. No one but John is worthy of her."

"So you have had your talk with mother?" she inquired.

"Yes—a solemnly sweet talk."

"She looks very frail. I wish she would go out more."

"If she would only go about the house more; if we could see her at table—if, indeed, she could only make up her mind to serve us, as well as pray for us, it might be better. I don't think mother understands the power of those indirect influences that distil from a holy, loving life. They seem intangible, but they may be more than effort."

"I cannot bear to think of mother ruffling her calm soul with the frets of the house—father's tempers and unkindness—my little vanities and social annoyances—and the never-ceasing worry, and unreasonableness of the servants."

"I don't know about that, Alice. I remember reading of a man who received as a precious gift a block of sandal-wood. He was a fine carver, and he resolved to make out of it a lovely image of a saint. And he worked and

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

worked, until the block was all cut away; and his ideal was as far from being realised as when he began. But one night a servant brought in a block of oak-wood for the fire, and on this homely wood he began to try again; and as he did so, his dream grew in beauty, and his knife in skill; and he made from the common wood that grew at his door an image lovely and wonderful, though he had cut the priceless exotic sandal-wood away in vain endeavour. The same is a parable, Alice, if you can read it. I am going away again in an hour or two."

"Will you not wait and see father?"

"For what good end? Father does not care to see me, unless I am ready to say, 'Your will, sir, and not mine.' I am not ready to say that. I must have liberty."

"Is liberty, then, so great a good? Women have to do without it."

"Life and liberty are both gifts of God; liberty is the greatest of the two. The fetters of women are small, uneasy things: they chiefly affect the body; the fetters of business, arms, government, which bind men, rust into the soul. I am going to the sea for a few weeks."

"Are you still sick for the sea, then?"

"You can't tell how much so. Even here in the green peace of the trees, I hear the waves purring, softly with little treble sounds, against

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

the sides of the ship. This turf seems firm to your little feet; but it is like the pulsing floor of the sea to me, and my heart leaps, and I could laugh outright, as I think of wave after wave rolling in torrent rapture."

"When will you go to sea?"

"Next Saturday."

"You may not get work by Saturday. Have you money? A desire like yours is a very sickness — I have some money left."

"I have a friend — a sailor. I can go to sea whenever I want to go."

"It is only Thursday. Where will you stay until Saturday?"

"With John McAslin."

"Then you will see Jessie, also?"

"Yes, I shall see her. Alice, I wish you could see her. She teaches music. Can't you take some lessons? You don't play as well as she does."

"Steve, why can't you learn to say pleasant, flattering things? I don't play as well as this. Jessie McAslin. Is that the way to coax me? You dear old stupid, you!"

"Will you take some lessons, Alice?"

"I will think about it."

"Do. It will please me so much."

"Send me her professional card. I suppose she has one."



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Will you really, dear?"

"I will do any right, reasonable thing to please you, Steve. You know that."

She looked at him as she spoke, and to her he seemed very good and desirable. The rough, restless life he had led for nearly three years had not left traces that repelled her. It was the hand of Nature that had tanned and marked him; but as yet the vices of humanity had not signed themselves on his open face. Doubtless he had met them in his strange experiences, — perhaps he had entertained them as passing guests; but they had not become his familiars. She sent him away with kisses and good wishes; and she was not jealous of Jessie McAslin, though she knew he was longing to see her. Alice loved her brother unselfishly; she had already divined that Steve might be won by a large, noble nature that controlled his own, to lead a more useful life; and if Jessie could thus save and bless him, she was glad to hope in such a salvation.

After Steve's departure, she sat all the afternoon making plans to bring about an acquaintance with this girl. She was sure that Steve already loved her; and she would not believe that there was any invincible reason for regarding the marriage as hopeless. Her own faith in her brother was perennial; she had the conviction

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

that if Steve were surrounded by the proper circumstances, he would be a man after any good woman's heart. A home would be an anchor to the restless spirit, and its obligations would sweetly compel to industry of some laudable kind.

As she sat in the summer sunshine, stitching gold and silver threads into a square of pink satin, she planned for Steve all kinds of domestic happiness. He must have a farm; he must have animals dependent on his care; he must be near the woods, and not far away from the sea. He must have a home not too fine for daily use, and yet fine enough to keep him bound to conventional decencies. He must have the right kind of a wife above all things; and she felt certain that Jessie was the right kind. Steve said "she was hard-headed and soft-hearted," and Alice considered this an excellent combination for her reckless, affectionate brother. Her want of fortune was also an advantage; money would have given her special rights and privileges, which would have irritated and made Steve rebellious; it was a necessity that he should have a wife who would repose absolute confidence and reliance on his love and exertions. As for social equality, there could be no question on that matter. Steve laughed at all such distinctions. He declared that he had found gentle-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

men and ladies in all classes, and that the accident of birth, or education, or wealth, or station, had little to do with their existence. With the unselfishness that was so large a part of her nature she began at once the work which she fondly hoped was to regenerate her brother. "I must give up my three months at Newport," she said with a sweet decision. "I must tell father that I wish to stay at home to practise my music. The expense will be so much less, and I am sure there will be no objection."

Contrary to her expectation, there was a serious objection. That very day Mr. Lloyd had begun to plan for his daughter's future, — a thing which had hitherto never troubled his speculations. He came home full of unusual hopes, and looked at Alice with a critical regard, that gradually became a settled approval.

"I had no idea she was so beautiful," he said to himself as he dressed for dinner. Coming downstairs he stepped slowly and with enforced dignity, holding his head up to his thoughts, which were of titles and coronets and courts.

Mrs. Lloyd had been an uncertain factor in Alice's plans; she was unable to say how her mother would regard them; and she hoped to strengthen her own opinions with her father's approval before it was necessary to explain her change of purpose.

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

For once Alice Lloyd was not sorry to see her mother's place at the dinner-table vacant. She felt that it would be easier to draw her father into conversation, that he would be more amenable to reason and less disposed to contradict and oppose whatever others desired; and this reflection made her sigh, for she understood that these moods were generally assumed for the very purpose of annoying the woman whom he had vowed to love and cherish.

This evening he came into the dining-parlour with a singularly subdued excitement. He condescended to praise the weather, he told Alice that she was looking very well, he was willing to allow that the soup was excellent and the wine properly cooled, and in short, for once he brought to his own table the urbanity and satisfaction that he usually reserved for strangers and mere acquaintances. But the rare mood rather frightened Alice; she did not like to disturb it; if she made him angry, he would be sure to point out reproachfully the fact that whenever he tried to be good-natured at home he was imposed upon. She involuntarily became silent and thoughtful, and was quite ignorant that her father was observing with approbation the beauty of her downcast face and the still grace of her reflective pensive mood.

Finally the servants left the room, and Alice

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

felt that she might now change the conversation proper before them to one more private and personal. Mr. Lloyd had the same thought, and was more prompt to realise it. Before Alice could form her request, he had asked, "Is Stephen in the house yet?"

The question, put without interest and without anger, grieved her. She involuntarily felt this absence of anger to be a wrong. It argued a want of feeling which would be far harder to influence than the most bitter resentment. She answered coldly, —

"He has gone away again."

"He did not care to see me, I suppose? I don't wonder. But I am astonished he had such a proper sense of shame."

"He would have liked to see you, father, but he thought you did not care to see him. He is going to sea on Saturday."

"He is a mental and physical tramp. I suppose your mother has been crying and praying over him all the day." He drank a glass of wine hastily, and then turned to Alice, who had risen from the table, and asked, "When do you go to Newport?"

"I do not want to go this summer, father. I wish — if you have no objections — to take some lessons, and perfect myself in music."

"What new fad is this?"

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

"It is not a new fad. I have often told you I would like to be proficient in some one thing."

"I want you to go to Newport. I have a particular reason for it, and I may as well tell you now as again. To-day I have been able to oblige, in a very essential way, a young English nobleman. He is going to Newport. Can you not see that this circumstance may contribute considerably to your *éclat* there? I intend to bring him out here on Saturday, and introduce him to you. The rest is in your own hands."

"I will not pretend that I do not understand you, father, but —"

"That is right! That is right! I knew you were a sensible girl. If your brother had only a thimbleful of your intelligence he might, at least, learn how to spend the money I make for him. The fact is, Alice, this young nobleman is of the best blood in England; you have, or will have, lots of solid American gold. He can take you to courts, give you a title, rank, prestige, and what not! You can give him the means to keep up the splendour of his natural position. I own that I should like to be father-in-law to an earl, and I am willing to pay for it."

During this speech Alice had been thinking rapidly, and she concluded that it was not yet

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

the time for opposition. She felt strong in her ability to temporise, until she had carried out her plans for Steve — afterwards — afterwards — well, afterwards was perhaps a long way off; she need not, at any rate, go to meet "afterwards." So when her father ceased speaking she asked gravely, but yet with a show of interest, —

"What is your opinion of this nobleman, father?"

"He is gentlemanly looking, I hear people say that he is handsome. I am no judge of Apollos."

"And yet you are yourself a very handsome man, father."

"Am I, little girl? Well, at least I have a very handsome daughter." He was much pleased with the genuine compliment, and also with the bright smile that answered his reply to it. For once they were ready to begin a dispute in a thoroughly good-natured mood; and Alice opened it by saying: —

"You would not wish me to marry a man who did not love me, or for whom I had neither love nor respect?"

"Have I said such a thing?" Then he added scornfully, "Love is supposed, in all marriages."

"At Newport a girl has great disadvantages.

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

All the beauties of the Continent are gathered there. It takes a fortune to dress yourself. The simplicity style will not pass now. It is dowdy. No matter how much a man is in love, he cannot offend the conventionalities; he cannot 'devote' himself. There are more engagements broken off in Newport than there are made. And this young Earl will be the idol of the season. Plenty of girls quite as pretty and as rich as I am will offer him sacrifices that Alice Lloyd could not think of. If you really wish me to marry this noble Englishman, father, you must let me have a fairer field than Newport for his conquest," said Alice, smiling.

"Where then?"

"This house is beautiful. The surroundings are romantic. Everything here is my ally. I have no contingents to bother me. This is the kind of home a man desires after the buzz and babble and hollowness of Newport; he will come here and find that out."

"You may be right. I will bring him here on Saturday. Women understand the tactics of matrimony better than men. You have no other lover, Alice? You are not in love with any other man?"

"I am not in love with any man. I have no lover. I never had one. You forget that I am just out of college."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"College! That has nothing to do with it. Love rather affects a gown and cap now. He is become a B. A.;" and he laughed good-humoredly at his own idea.

"Perhaps he has, father," said Alice. "At any rate, if you do not object, I should like to become a Doctor of Music. I only need a good teacher to do so."

"Very well; but mind this, I will have no foreign, long-haired woman's darling coming to teach you. Get a sensible, commonplace American, who wears a necktie and gets his hair cut."

"I thought of a young lady who has been highly recommended to me,—a Miss Jessie McAslin."

Alice had determined to name the McAslins very carefully; and then, without intent or consideration, the word slipped off her tongue. She watched its effect breathlessly. For a moment it appeared to awaken no memory; then, swift as light, it penetrated the dust and forgetfulness of years; and the man's face paled, and the glass in his hand trembled, and he said, as if to himself:—

"McAslin! McAslin! Where have I heard the name? Jessie! Jessie! Jessie McAslin!"

"I dare say you have seen the name very often, without consciously putting it into your mem-

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

ory," answered Alice. "Miss McAslin has a brother, a clever young man, who writes for the reviews and newspapers."

"Now I remember; very sensible articles they are; just my views on the gold standard."

"Then you have no objection to my employing Miss McAslin?"

"No. If you are right about Newport, she may help to pass the summer profitably. I wish it was over, for my part."

The conversation was dropped without any answer to this remark. Alice did not think it wise to ask for reasons, which would give opportunity for saying disagreeable things; she handed her father his newspaper, and went into the next room and played softly a pretty nocturne. The music did not offend him, as it too often did; he let the sweet dreamy notes sink into his consciousness; and memory set herself to them. He was twenty-two again. The bloom of young desire, the purple light of love, were his own; and pretty Jessie Allison was walking hand in hand with him, through the sweet clover of the home meadow. He had hopes then, sweet innocent hopes; now, he had only their memories.

Anon he began to wonder about the McAslins. Jessie had married a man of that name; could these young people be her children? He

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

felt an unusual interest in this question. Why should he care? He told himself that he did not care; and yet faces and voices long forgotten came back to his inward eye and ear; and he grew nervous at last under the unusual companionship. As the shadows deepened, he rose up and called for lights and the evening papers, and in their astonishing records of struggling, sinning, game-playing humanity found an habitual and congenial atmosphere. He was at once his own man in it; and the wraith of his youth—with its dreams and hopes—passed away from him.

In the morning, early, Alice wrote to Jessie McAslin. She wished her to receive the note before Steve went to sea: for she judged it likely he would hear about it, and so understand that his sister was disposed to sympathise with his wishes and friendships. It was of course a formal little note; and yet somehow, notes do carry the spirit in which they are written. Unthoughtful of this occult influence, Jessie was yet sensitive to it. "What a nice note!" she said to herself as she read it. It found her also in an hour favourable for consideration. She was sitting alone with Steve, when the sharp whistle of the postman penetrated the room. Mrs. McAslin was busy about her household affairs, and her husband sat reading and talking

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

beside her. Flora and her lover had gone for a walk. John had been invited to some Trade's Hall, to discuss with its members questions relating to their position. Steve, who was generally delighted to go with John to such meetings, had this night declined to do so.

He had placed himself in a comfortable position at one open window of the parlour; Jessie sat at the other. She had a book and pencil in her hand, and appeared to be making notes, or entries; really she was speculating about Steve, and the book and pencil were only a pretence. She was weary of it, when the postman's whistle blew a fresh interest into the room. Steve insisted on going downstairs for what had been left, and Jessie made no objections. He brought up two letters,—one for John, and one for Jessie. Jessie took her letter with a little curiosity: its appearance was unfamiliar. In a moment or two she was possessed of its contents, and she rose up in an excited manner, and went to her father and mother. Steve sat down again in his seat by the window. He knew the letter was from Alice, and he expected to hear it discussed. He was quite prepared when she returned to the room with her mother, both of them in a glow of pride and pleasure.

"Steve," cried Mrs. McAslin, "what do you think? Jessie has a note from Miss Lloyd—

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Nicholas Lloyd's daughter—asking Jessie to give her music lessons. Do you remember our conversation about the Lloyds? You said you knew the son at school?"

"I did."

"What kind of a boy was he?"

"In some ways he was n't a bad boy. He couldn't learn anything useful, or up-to-date."

"That does not matter, mother," interrupted Jessie. "The boy might be very stupid and disagreeable, and the girl clever and delightful. The thing that puzzles me is, who told Miss Lloyd about my playing and teaching? I know no one who visits in her set."

"Sets run over and into each other in New York, and inquiries are made from all kinds of people," answered Steve. "I suppose you will give her lessons, Jessie?"

"I will go to see her to-morrow. She has sent me a marked time-table, and if I let her know what train I will take, she says 'the carriage will meet me.' I will telegraph her to-night. I wonder which will be the most convenient train?"

"Ten-thirty," said Steve, promptly.

"How do you know?"

"I have acquaintances up the river. I always take that train. It is an express. Shall I go and telegraph for you?"

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

"I wish you would, Steve."

He went at once to obey her wish, and Jessie discussed the affair and laid out her best walking-suit, and retouched her black hat for the expedition. In this way she wearied her enthusiasm a little, and Steve found her on his return sitting in the parlour, silent and depressed. "Steve was going away." Her heart iterated this complaint, and refused to be consoled by any mere financial good fortune, for Steve had become a large part of Jessie's thoughts and imaginings. He constantly surprised and puzzled her. John said he was a fine classical scholar, and he did not appear to be in need of money. His good breeding was evident, and when he attempted to use slang or popular language, he could not do so as one born to its peculiarities.

Steve, Jessie reflected, had the carriage of a gentleman, and that air of distinction only attained by a childhood passed among refined people and surroundings. Yet he was going to sea as a steward's assistant. He would have to obey orders, write out menus, make lists of stores, and do work which she could not fancy a man of fine instincts and habits being willing to do. He even hoped to exchange this work at Liverpool for that of a man before the mast; and he spoke of such employments as if they

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

were natural and native to him. What was he? Or rather, who was he? Even to John, he said nothing of his antecedents; or if he had done so, John was as reticent as Steve could possibly desire.

These circumstances of mystery made a favourable atmosphere for the growth of love; and before Jessie was aware of the fact, she was more interested in Steve than she would have admitted, even to her own consciousness. She realised one thing, however—that she had a heartache about his going away. In less than two weeks he had made himself a part of her happiness; already she felt the loneliness of the house without him. How good-hearted he was! How ready to help! How self-contained! How gentlemanly in the best sense of the word! How handsome! She hesitated at this declaration of her heart. She was not prepared to say Steve was handsome, but he was certainly clever; and in some directions John thought him well educated,—and John's opinion was final with Jessie.

As she was considering this list of his excellencies, Steve returned. He had sent the telegram, and Jessie was now under an obligation to take the ten-thirty train for Lloyd's Station. "I am so sorry," she said, "for I intended to see you sail in the morning, and now I cannot

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

do so. I am half inclined to send another telegram. I am so sorry, Steve!"

"Jessie, those words are very pleasant to me. Did you really intend to go down to the steamer?" His eyes, glowing with tender fire, sought hers, and he took her hands within his clasp. She saw the love words on his lips; another moment of such feeling and he must have made them audible. Alas! he did not venture on that moment. With a great sigh he turned away, letting her hands fall from his with a hopelessness which Jessie could not but feel and understand. The silence following was embarrassing, and Steve made no effort to break it. Jessie was wounded by the advance and retreat; and her pride taught her to affect ignorance and indifference. "John likes you so much," she said, "that I am sorry you are going away. Do you know where John is speaking to-night? I wish I could hear him."

"Nothing can be easier. It is a lovely night, and the hall is but twelve blocks away. Put on your hat and we will go there."

There was something in Steve's voice she liked to obey. They went out together and loitered down Second avenue. The broad way was yet busy; men and women touched them on either hand, and the children singing to their games on the sidewalks gave an air of happiness

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

and holiday to the scene. The park invited them to its green shadows, and they strolled to a bench and sat down. Jessie was nervously anxious to talk, — silence revealed too much, — and she could think of no subject but the sea.

"It is strange you love it so much; were you born near it?" she asked.

"I was born on Twenty-third Street. But my mother's family were sailors. It is in the blood. I love the sea as I love my mother and my native land. I hear it calling me to-night, as plainly as if it had a human voice. I must feel as Euripides felt when his incomparable invocation to the sea was written."

"I should like to hear it," she said softly; and the words that had been singing in Steve's heart came instantly in rhythmic ebb and flow from his lips: —

Would God I were now by the Sea!
By the winding, wet-worn caves,
By the ragged rents of the rocks;
And that there as a bird I might be,
White-winged, with the sea-skimming flocks,
Where the spray and the breeze blow free,
O'er the ceaseless mirth of the waves,
And dishevel their loose grey locks.
I would spread my wings to the moist, salt air,
And my white, wide wings should carry me
Lifted up, out over the Sea.
Carry — I heed not where;

MATRIMONIAL PLANS

Somewhither, far away;
Where the breast of the breeze is sprinkled with spray;
Where the restless deep is maddened with glee,
Over the waves' wild ecstasy;
Through the wild blown foam!

As he spoke the divine longing and rapture of those who are "bond to the deep" touched her. She forgot the avenue. She forgot the stress of human hopes and fears that filled her heart. The sense of the sea was in her soul, — its wild and solemn grandeur, its mysterious beauty; for one moment she felt through Steve, for that moment she understood him.

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CHAPTER III

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

SHE found it far more difficult, to understand him an hour later. They were then in the half-filled, half-lit Trades Hall. John's speech was over, and a swarthy, untidy man was on the little platform, haranguing the restless men and women. John leaned on the back of a chair, as if waiting for reply; he saw Jessie and Steve enter, and motioned them to the vacant chairs beside him. The speaker was urging on a strike, with passionate invectives and much clap-trap oratory.

"You need not believe anything he says," whispered Steve to Jessie; "the making of noise is his business."

"The worker is constantly more and more imposed upon," screamed the orator. "If it were not for the Trades Unions, he would be a serf!"

"That is nonsense," said John.

"It is the truth, sir."

"I say again, that is nonsense. The last twenty years, wages have been largely increased;

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

hours of labour have been shortened. The working man has gained more political power, more social sympathy, more comfortable homes. In every way he has been favoured. Has he improved these advantages? Is he better at home? Is he friendlier with his employers? Is he wiser in managing his own affairs? I leave you to answer these questions."

"Whatever good has come to him, has come through Trades Unions," insisted the speaker,

"I deny that," answered John. "I assert that the Unions often forbid men to do as well as they can, or to work as hard as they wish. I say, they often exercise an oppression that few would endure at the hands of the legal government. I say, they throw thousands out of work who have no concern in their quarrels, nor any share in their funds. I say, they rob the industrious man of his labour and the able man of his skill. I accuse them of intimidation, and of creating privileged bodies of workmen. No amount of affected sympathy with the working-man will get rid of facts like these."

"Who gives him sympathy?" was the retort. "Not the rich, sleek sinners, whom God and the devil leave alone, to succeed and prosper; such men as A, and B, and C, and D, and Nicholas Lloyd, — are they not the incarnation of selfishness and covetousness?"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Then Steve leaped to his feet, and finally went forward to the platform. "I will not defend A, and B, and C, and D, and Nicholas Lloyd," he cried; "let their works and their charities defend them; what I want to say is this — the working-man is as selfish and as covetous as the rich man."

His words fell full, clearly rounded, and with an invincible air of authority, as he stood with flashing eyes waiting for a reply. For a minute there was an intense silence, followed by an audible murmur. Then the chairman of the meeting rose and said: —

"The gentleman owes the assembly an apology. He will please to make it."

"He owes them a statement of his position," answered Steve, "and he will make it in a few words: When a poor man within half a dollar of starvation marries, he is selfish. When he spends his wage on beer, and leaves his wife and children hungry, he is selfish. When a poor man hoards his dollars in an old stocking, he is as covetous as the rich man hoarding his dollars in a bank. The mechanic who does bad work instead of good work, — the man who does not give a day's work for a day's wage, — the hands who dawdle about the factories, and take continual holidays, knowing that their families must suffer for them, — the thriftless, lounging

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

idlers, who are everybody's enemies as well as their own, because their example is a poison, and their vice a crime against the feeble, whom it helps to corrupt — all these are as selfish and covetous as the rich usurer or the rich debauchee. Say what you will of the selfishness and covetousness of the rich, the poor are just as bad. Any man is a selfish, covetous scoundrel who sits down at the feast of life and tries to slink away without paying his reckoning. I am a poor man, and I know that in this respect I am both selfish and covetous."

The last sentences of this speech were flung into the assembly with all the passion necessary to make them heard above the tumult of dissatisfaction they caused. Cries of "Silence!" "Turn him out!" "Who is the scab?" "Give him a lesson!" grew more and more insistent; and finally a big, swaggering fellow left his seat and walked straight up to Steve. Jessie could have shrieked aloud; she entreated her brother to interfere.

"Let him alone," answered John. "He had no right to say such words here unless he was prepared to defend them;" yet John rose and intently watched the proceedings.

The new character in them stood squarely in front of Steve, and said: "Our Chairman has

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

already told you to make an apology, sir. You had better do it at once."

"What if I decline?" asked Steve.

"I shall then make you do so."

"How will you make me?"

"Take off your coat and I will show you how."

In a moment two coats were flung to the end of the platform; in the next, Steve had forced his antagonist into a chair, where he held him with the grip of a clamp of iron. There was a swift and tumultuous interference, cries of "police," shrieks of women—and John went rapidly forward to the help of his friend. Jessie clasped her hands distractedly, and urged him to "hurry;" but there was no need to help Steve in his dilemma. Every man present understood the meaning of that swift blow and movement, which had nonplussed and made powerless the recipient of it. Watchful as a bird, and not to be surprised, Steve went for his coat and put it on with the greatest deliberation. His look and attitude were unmistakable; and there was not only a subsidence of opposition, but also a kind of breathless admiration for the swift, indisputable reply he had given his challenger. No one even answered him, when he walked to the front of the platform and scornfully thanked the Union for "the farce

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

of asking men to a free argument and then giving them such a sample of fair play."

Calm as he appeared, he was really much excited, for he passed John, and saw him not; and he would also have passed Jessie if she had not grasped his hand and called his name. Then he stopped. All his soul was in his face as he looked into Jessie's eyes. And surely he saw some answering gleam in hers, for he drew her arm within his own and clasped it tight, and so passed out of the hall. No one stopped him; the noble inner man was in command, and men and women felt his influence, and fell back to the right and the left as Steve went forward. He was followed by no word of disapproval; rather they gave him an involuntary respect and admiration.

"You see what men are," he said to John, as he was joined by his friend.

"They can understand animal force; they want to knock 'Truth down.'"

'How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!'

You taught me that quotation, Steve," said John, "and so I have the right to give it back to you."

All were much excited by the events of the evening, and they sat until long after midnight

1

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

discussing them. Then, when the family retired, Steve bid all but John "good-bye." He said he should be away before they were up in the morning, though perhaps he was influenced by a more personal motive. At that hour every one was at his best and kindest, and Steve's farewell would have its deepest significance.

"I am sorry to leave you," he said, giving his hands to Mr. and Mrs. McAslin. "I owe you for much happiness and hospitality."

"You have paid handsomely for your room and board, Steve Morrison," said Mr. McAslin, "and you will be very welcome in my house whenever you desire to come to it." Mrs. McAslin gave him a motherly kiss, Flora a kind "good-bye;" then he turned to Jessie.

"God bless you, Jessie," he said. She answered softly, "God bless you, Steve! You will come back to us?"

"If I live, I will come back." Then they looked straight into each other's eyes, and a certain subtle something passed between them, and both knew that their hearts had longed for a warmer and sweeter farewell.

It was Steve, however, who played the woman's part in this love affair; his was the romance, the ideality, and the sweet unselfishness of the passion. Jessie was a girl of her era, and the necessity of money-making was her prime instinct.

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

She was in love as a man is in love. Her business had to be fully attended to; her love was for her hours of relaxation and pleasure. But Steve's business was to love.

Jessie had never been in love; she had always been sufficient for herself—for her needs of every kind. It was true that there was in her heart a tenderer feeling for Steve than she had ever before known; and his last eager, loving look had perforce drawn from her an answering one; but she quickly took herself to task for her weakness. "He is the best man I ever knew," she thought, as she carefully put up her hair in its crimping pins, "but I do not intend to lose myself on unknown ground. He was grand to-night when he faced that crowd of whimpering, complaining men and told them the truth for once in their lives. And the swift, satisfactory way in which he pinned that bully down was splendid! I was frightened a little, but I would like to be frightened very often in that kind of a way. Heigho! I wish he were rich; or, if I were rich it would do as well—perhaps better. But poverty and matrimony—no, no! there is something else for a girl than that combination, these days."

This train of thought reminded her of Miss Lloyd, and she began to deliberate about her "terms." She was afraid to ask too much, and

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

still more afraid to ask too little. Finally, she concluded to call at Pond's as she went to the train, and find out what was the maximum price for out-of-town lessons. Steve went to sleep thinking of her beauty, her kindness, and her cleverness; Jessie went to sleep thinking of the rôle she had to fill the next day, and laying her plans for securing all her rights and every tittle of her self-respect.

In the morning she was silent, preoccupied, and full of importance; the rest of the family said she was cross. Not quite that; but she had drawn to her centre all her forces, and therefore this morning she had no alms of good humour and good-will to scatter. Even her mother's natural curiosity annoyed her. Why should she want news of her old lover, of his wife and house and children? Alas! twenty years does not understand that the memories of age are as full of sentiment and sweetness as the hopes of youth.

Her mind on the journey was solely occupied with counselling her conduct in the strange and unexpected position in which she found herself. "Destiny loves surprises," she thought, "but I shall try to be ready for any phase of this event. I will not be offended by ceremony nor be made effusive by kindness. I will have no friendship with my pupil, and I will permit no

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

unwise familiarity. If the son whom Steve knew is at home, I will not encourage any acquaintance with him. Poor Steve! I wonder if he has reached the open sea yet." She thought it very improbable that Miss Lloyd knew anything of her father's first love, or that if she had heard the story, she would care to mention it to the daughter of the woman he had treated so badly. But if circumstances brought this history into conversation, then Jessie made up her mind to treat the subject as mythical, as of no importance, and now quite forgotten. Many other resolves of the same kind she made as the train sped swiftly to Lloyd's Station, and then when she met Alice face to face, she suffered them all to slip from her mind.

It is so easy to reckon without our host; and that was precisely what Jessie had done. She had calculated very fairly her own strength, but she made no allowance for the influence Alice might exert over her. And the influence of Alice, though not very apparent, was permeating and persuasive. From the first moment of their meeting she took an initiative that the really stronger woman could not resist. Jessie had prepared herself for an entirely business interview; the social footing on which she was received took her by surprise, and she fell without resistance under the charm of Alice's unaf-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

fect kindness. The lofty rooms with their revelations in artistic furnishing, the ceramic treasures, the pictures, the books, the noiseless service, the beautiful garden—to all these influences Jessie was far more sensitive than she believed herself.

Still she adhered to her "terms." They were given her without inquiry or dissent, and then teacher and pupil went together to the music-room. There Jessie honestly earned her money, for she was not only conscientious, but she also entered into the very spirit of her work. The piano delighted her. Never before had she felt such finely strong notes under her fingers, and she said with great feeling:—

"Oh, Miss Lloyd! can you imagine what it is to play on an instrument that understands you? My piano is not to be compared with this; yet it is acquainted with me; we are friends; it comprehends my confidences and my moods, and we laugh and cry together."

"I have not yet made a friend of my instrument," replied Alice. "I do not do it justice. It responds to your fingers in a way that amazes me. And yet often at twilight I hear strange, sweet voices in the strings. Where do they come from? Have you ever thought of that?"

"Do you think simple wire outstretched makes them! Oh, no! Listen to this!" said

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

Jessie; and in a kind of inspiration she brought forth in low, soft tones the Mermaid's Song from "Oberon." Its passion of longing sadness, its delicious pain and exquisite abandonment, thrilled both girls. Under Jessie's long, small hands the keys responded as if they were living, loving things, and her lifted face reflected every word of the song, for her heart was singing it. Alice, with sweet, proud eyes, watched the sensitive evoker of such melody, and thought of Steve with something like elation.

It was at this moment that both were suddenly aware of some strange, intruding influence. Jessie became silent, and the piano seemed to fall an octave in tone. Alice turned slightly, and saw her father and a stranger standing between the portières. As they came forward the music ceased altogether, and Jessie stood up. But on her face there was the reflection of the song; her eyes glowed, her lips were slightly parted, she was the incarnation of its sweet, sad melody. Mr. Lloyd introduced Lord Medway to Alice; then Jessie heard her own name, and she was compelled to lift her eyes and acknowledge the courtesy. Afterward, every moment was an embarrassment. She was entreated to play the song again, and she consented; but there was something wanting

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

which she had given to Alice. Mr. Lloyd stood by her side, observing her with great interest, though he said little. Lord Medway was enthusiastic in his compliments. Jessie acknowledged their praises with a smile, and took her departure. She was trembling with excitement, and glad when she found herself in the crowded solitude of the railway car.

In this confessional she grew rapidly angry with Jessie McAslin. "To think," she mentally ejaculated, — "to think that I should have fallen so absolutely and absurdly under that girl's influence! And what is more humiliating, under the influence of chairs, and tables, and pictures, and china cups! It makes me sick! And then that 'lord' business! Why did they introduce me? I don't want to know any 'lords.' And why, oh, why, did I sing that song again?"

She tormented herself all the way home, and was glad to find no one present but Flora. Flora was busy with her sewing, and she asked Jessie no questions, and the girl, pleading fatigue, went to her room to rest. Fortunately she soon fell asleep. When she awakened, the sun was nearing the western horizon, and she heard her father's voice and John's laugh answering it. She rose rapidly to her feet, and her first thought was a healthy, physical

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

desire for her dinner. Sleep had calmed and refreshed her, and she was now ready to do herself justice.

"After all," she reflected, "I behaved creditably. Things went better than I expected. I looked my best, I sang well, and I was neither discourteous nor presuming. I think I may say, with that egotistical old Rousseau, 'I do not know a better person than myself.'"

This little bit of conceit amused her; she bathed her face and smoothed her hair to the smile it evoked, and then joined the family. Every one had a welcome for her, and John drew her fondly into the empty chair set next his own. "I kept it for you, Jessie," he said. "Flora declares you came home too tired to talk."

"Flora did not ask me to talk. She had a new paper pattern on her mind, so I saved my news for more appreciative listeners."

"Did you get your pupil?" asked her father.

"Yes — on my own terms, too."

"Is she nice? Is she pleasant-tempered?"

"I don't think, mother, that the word 'nice' suits her. A nice woman is one who always behaves like other women. I think Miss Lloyd would judge for herself, under all circumstances. She is, however, beautiful, and I think she has a sweet and gracious disposition."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"What did she wear?"

"A gown of Indian mull, and real Valenciennes. I was covetous of it, John."

"Did you see Mrs. Lloyd?"

"Yes, mother. I saw her for half an hour. She is tall and walks very softly. Her face is thin and worn, but her eyes are remarkable; they are so dark and lambent, and I noticed them constantly dilating—not to what was said, but to her own thoughts. Mr. Lloyd came in just before I left, and Lord Medway was with him."

Then there followed a conversation largely composed of ejaculations and descriptions. It wearied Jessie; but she knew how much her father and mother loved to see this other life through her eyes. So she told them all about the house and the garden; the furniture, the equipage, and the order of the lunch; and as far as her casual knowledge permitted, she gave them her impressions of Mr. Lloyd and his guest, Lord Medway. But she was glad when they were satisfied, and she could go away with John and express herself after her own desire. And she was not so hopeful as might have been expected.

"John," she said, "I think I have begun too well. When people are so pleasant at first, the pleasantness does not last."

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

"Sometimes it does. All will likely depend on your pupil."

"Women get on pretty well—if men don't interfere. Generally speaking, we agree to believe in each other, until they do. I fear the man in this case."

"Who is he?"

"Lord Medway. He gave me a glance he had no right to give; for I think he is Miss Lloyd's lover."

"What kind of a glance?"

"One of inquisitive admiration. It was as if he had said, 'I wonder who you are? I admire you very much!'"

"I don't see how a flash of the eyes could say all that, Jessie."

"When the time comes for you to say 'all that' you will understand how in a moment your eyes can say it."

"But why should they? Have I not a tongue?"

"Your tongue will be too slow. Tongues need to be taught. Eyes talk naturally."

"Has Steve been giving you any such glances?"

"One or two."

"Have you returned them?"

"Perhaps."

"Then keep whatever promise they have

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

made. To raise a hope or confidence and then deceive it, Jessie, I think nothing can be so mean or so treacherous."

"I wish I knew something about him. I wish I felt sure in my own mind."

"If ever you have a doubt about any way or any work, turn back, or give it up; doubt is error."

"Why does n't he explain himself? Why not say plainly who he is and where he comes from?"

"That is his affair — as yet. When are you going to the Lloyds' again?"

"Next Wednesday. As I have told you, I don't know how long it will last. I do not trust such fair beginnings. However, from every harvest I have always got my ear of corn."

"Don't be so mercenary, little woman. And I do wish you would trust humanity more. If you lose faith in men and women, you will soon lose faith in God and yourself. All men are not liars. All friendship is not feigning."

"I saw one class of men and women in the hall last night. I saw another class at Lloyd Park to-day; how am I to judge them, John?"

"Do not judge them. Believe in them. There is a love of goodness in men and women to which you may always appeal, and never in

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

vain. Shipwrecks, epidemics, fires, disasters of any kind, bring to the front, without fail, some heroic, compassionate spirit."

"As for being mercenary, John, we have to be mercenary. What is life without money? And it is a constant fight to get your share of it."

"Certainly, Jessie, you don't want money simply for your own luxury or pleasure, or for the sake of hoarding it?"

"Certainly, I do not."

"Then are you able and willing to be one of God's stewards and dispense wealth properly for him? Understand, it is no light work. There will be an audit to meet which you must daily and hourly prepare for. No one's wealth is accidental."

"Wealth," continued John, "is given to be spent in good works, and the holders are agents for him who declares the 'silver and the gold are mine.' As for me, I should fear the awful responsibility of wealth. 'Godliness with contentment' is the great gain I desire."

"Yet you are admitting that wealth is a power for good."

"At the same time, I do not say it is necessary for the noblest work. Did Paul, or Luther, or Whitefield, or Wesley depend upon it? Indeed, no! When Pope Leo the Tenth realised that

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Luther could not be bought, and said angrily, 'This German beast cares nothing for gold,' he hit the truth about all great moral leaders. As a social regenerator, gold in the hands of a good man is a potent factor. It can build churches and colleges and libraries. It can bind men together with the iron ties of railways and cables and telegraphs. It can prepare succour for the sick and dying in hospitals. It has a thousand great works to do for the uplifting and comforting of humanity. But if wealth is not spent in this manner, then the increase of wealth means only the increase of misery."

"But, John, how few rich men do spend their wealth in social regeneration! They hoard it and luxuriate in it, and then leave it to their children."

"Then they must pay the dreadful penalty of false stewards. Their hearts will grow as fat as brawn and cold as ice, until upon their sinful selfishness crashes the awful message, 'Thou fool! this night!'"

"John, you terrify me. Are we then to live only for others?"

"Oh, Jessie, in living for others we live for ourselves best, and most of all. We are the children of the King of heaven and earth, and we serve him not for wages, but for love. We are taking the journey of life through this world

JESSIE'S AFFAIRS

on his order. We are 'in the King's highway.'"

"It is a very sorrowful and dangerous way to many."

"It is, Jessie. The devils of murder and robbery, of drunkenness and lust, of greed and oppressions of every description are to be met on it. Apollyon has straddled over the whole width of the way; but then, what are we here for but to 'prepare the way of the Lord' and to make its paths clean and straight, and utterly destroy whatever defiles it? When men have done this the millennium will be here."

"You make life such a terribly solemn thing John."

"Solemn, but sweet; for we have so much love and loving-kindness, as we take it together; father and mother love, brother and sister love, husband and wife love; friends, and books, and neighbours, and fellow-travellers; good men and women, all going the same way—the way of holiness, the King's highway."

"You ought to be a preacher, John, and not a lawyer."

"Every man and woman may be a preacher in the home, on the railways, out in the highways and byways. For instance, in teaching Miss Lloyd music, you may teach her many other things."

11

22



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Miss Lloyd is an uncertain quantity, John. She may be able to teach me other things. I will tell you more about Miss Lloyd a month hence. Now, John, I have had a hard day and am very tired. I must go to sleep."

Then she kissed him, and, it must be admitted, put away from her consideration all that he had said. Her interest did not lie in that road at present. She let the thought of riches and the obligations of riches slip from her consciousness, and began to wonder where Steve was, what he was doing, and if he were thinking of her. Then with a sigh she closed her eyes and whispered to herself, "What is in my heart shall lie quiet a little while. I am tired—tired of everything."

CHAPTER IV

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

THE month which Jessie had allowed herself for determining the value of her first kind reception at Lloyd Park passed swiftly away; and Alice disappointed none of the expectations that her gracious behaviour had raised at the first meeting. Indeed, in spite of Jessie's doubting, touchy individuality, a kind of friendship had grown up between the girls; though Jessie was more and more puzzled as to what possible circumstances had brought them together. For it was soon evident to her that Alice was no enthusiast about her music; she would have shirked her lessons if her conscientious teacher would have allowed her to do so. She preferred, evidently, to ask Jessie questions, and to talk to her endlessly about her life and likings. And though Jessie was not destitute of that dubious dislike and suspicious want of confidence which seems the natural condition between employer and employee, she found it hard to maintain it in the presence of Alice.

41

221



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Had Jessie known that she was being wooed for Steve's sake, she would have resented the familiarity; but who of us is proof against kindness which we believe to be given freely to our person and attributes? Jessie's "unselfishness" vanished gradually before the girlish confidences that followed the usual music lesson; for there was always a delicate little lunch ready at its close; and if people do not become good-natured while eating together, then they ought to drop their association at once and for ever.

Their first confidence related to Lord Medway. For two weeks he remained at Lloyd Park, and the music lessons were much interrupted by his intrusions. He himself was receiving at the same time a lesson which his vanity could not comprehend until it was put into unmistakable English for him. Jessie had divined his admiration at their first meeting; at their second, he made it still less equivocal. He had discovered by this time that she was present simply as Miss Lloyd's teacher; and his ideas about women were always modified by their rank or wealth. His underhand, furtive admiration deeply offended Jessie; but he would not accept such tokens of her annoyance as it was in her power to give without making herself and him also unpleasantly conspicuous. At her fourth visit, she found him in the train,

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

when she entered it to return to her home, and he immediately addressed her in language about whose affectionate tenor there was no mistaking.

She looked at him with a calm and sovereign contempt, and answered: "We have nothing in common, sir. My affections are placed far beyond you. I would not marry you for all the coronets in England."

He tittered, but he was angry enough as he continued: "I did not ask you to marry me. Telling a pretty girl you love her is a long way from wishing to marry her."

"Not in my case, sir. Loving a girl is the way to marry her, as I have been taught. But there is no question of love between you and me. I should find it impossible on my part."

"You are a saucy little minx. And yet you are so piquantly and provokingly tempting that I intend to —"

"If you say another word to me, sir, I will report you to the conductor. Therefore, if you do not wish to be left on the roadside, you will do well to find another seat. I will not endure your company any longer."

Then he lifted his hat and went to the other end of the car, an angry and a mortified man; and Jessie smiled serenely at the courtesy. "It is the force of habit," she thought; "he is one of those creatures who always lift their hats to

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

women, but never, under any circumstances, respect them." In this decision, however, Jessie was wrong. It was the force of virtue that for once bared the nobleman's head; and in spite of his mortification he watched the proud, self-respecting girl with a very sincere admiration and esteem.

When she went to Lloyd Park the following Saturday Lord Medway was in Newport, and Alice took Jessie into her confidence. "I think he wishes me to marry him," she said, "and perhaps I may do so; for father desires the match very much. Have you ever been in love, Jessie?" she asked.

"No — not quite — that is, I don't know. I have met a young man lately whom I could love, if it were prudent to do so."

"Oh, then, you are not in love; you are in prudence. What kind of a young man? Is he handsome?"

"No, and yes. I will tell you what kind of a young man he is. He was at a Trade's meeting with my brother John and me, one night, and some one speaking there called A, and B, and C, and D, and Nicholas Lloyd 'hellish incarnations of selfishness and covetousness.' He leaped upon the platform and told the workingmen there and then to their faces, that they were in their way every bit as selfish and covetous. And

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

a big bullying fellow ordered him to make an apology, and Steve flung off his coat and knocked the man down before he knew what had happened."

"Oh, how splendid! I would have given a thousand dollars to have been there! Did you say his name was Steve?"

"Yes; Steve Morrison."

"How can you help loving a man like that! Does he love you? Let me kiss you for him." Her face was one charming smile, her eyes full of radiant tears. She was thinking to herself that in spite of the misunderstanding between Steve and his father, Steve would not sit still and hear his father called a "hellish incarnation." "Good! Good!" she ejaculated; "and indeed, Jessie, I cannot see how you can help loving such a man as that! What hinders?"

"I don't know who he is. He says nothing of his past; nothing of his future; nothing of his friends. He admits that he is lazy, and too fond of travel. He is a fine scholar; and yet, when he needs money he does any kind of rough, menial work to obtain what he wants — that, and no more. He has the carriage and manners of a well-bred man, and yet he is poor. He is an enigma; and no sensible girl wants to marry an enigma. Now with Lord Medway it is different. You know who and what he is,



11-11-11

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

and where he comes from ; and you may imagine fairly enough the kind of life you would be likely to lead with him. This Steve Morrison may be a proper person — and he may not."

"Oh, I am sure there is nothing wrong with him ; I think I could trust him."

"You know only the right side of the garment of life. I have seen the rough, frayed inside. I go with John among the labouring classes sometimes, and in our own home we have learned what pinching and want means, — not lately, not since John and I could work ; but the scars of poverty are never obliterated by any number of years. I don't want, therefore, to marry a poor, struggling man. I never wish to see my husband toil and suffer as my father has done. I could not bear it so sweetly as mother bears it. I should become cross and disappointed, and perhaps wish for anarchy to reign in every one's affairs."

"So, then, this poor Steve Morrison will have to become rich Steve Morrison before you permit yourself to love him."

"I don't want riches. I want competence and security. I like work. I should be glad to help him ; but he must like work also : I mean steady, respectable work."

"I can understand that to be just and right ;

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

and yet, it does seem a pity that Love has to take money into consideration."

"Money is a never-ceasing consideration with the poor. How is it with the rich ?"

"Much the same. Do you believe Lord Medway would marry me if I were a poor girl?"

"Perhaps not."

"I am sure not. I should be as much out of his thoughts as a three-roomed cottage to live in, or a ready-made suit of clothing to wear."

"If you look at the matter in that light, Alice, I would drop it altogether. There ought to be love between you ; money is not enough."

"Yet, you will not love without money. I have always read that love was the first and the last thing ; that we ought to marry for love, and work for money — and so on."

"We must do as the world does, and not as it says. The world frowns on imprudent marriages. I think it is right. Steve himself told the workingmen that if they married within half a dollar of starvation they are brutally selfish ; and they are."

"Nevertheless, I am sorry for the poor, splendid fellow. I wish you could love him — just for himself."

"You wish me to marry for love. Do you love Lord Medway?"

11

12



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"He is pleasant and kind, and I am proud of his position. I like to think of the title I shall bear; of the magnificent old home I shall go to; of the society and travel, — yes, and of the grand wedding father has promised me. Any girl would like such things, and would not dislike the man who gave them to her unless he was remarkably ugly or disagreeable. Lord Medway is fairly good-looking; he has an aristocratic way with him, and he professes to think me the loveliest woman he ever saw. After he went to Newport I certainly missed him for a day or two. I suppose, then, I have a little love for him — a little love, which time and circumstances may make greater."

"Still, Alice, I do not think you are in love. I remember the first night I met Steve. We were all sitting at dinner when he came to us. I thought I had never seen a man with such a radiant face."

"He had such a happy, careless, uphead manner," continued Jessie, "such kind, thoughtful ways. His eyes were full of light and laughter; and if I speak the truth, I must say that I loved away myself in one short hour; yes, in one short minute. And I confess, moreover, that I never was so happy in my life. It was joy to be in his presence; and even when he had gone away, the sense of the delight remained."

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

"How I envy you, Jessie!" said Alice.

"That night I said to myself, 'Love is not our choice, it is our fate.' Afterwards, I brought reason to my condition; for I feel pretty sure, Love only conquers when we dare not, or will not, reason with him."

"But, oh, why wish to conquer, or to reason away so sweet an experience? If I could feel such love, I would give up everything for it; that is, if the man who inspired it was a good man, and worthy of a good woman's love."

"I doubt it. You would think of what people might say. Your prospective title already fills your imagination. Your wedding and your wedding dresses have become familiar thoughts. Your talk is very much of the English Court, and of English Society; and if your one true lover were now to appear, and he was a poor man, you would feel it as hard to accept him as I feel it difficult to accept Steve Morrison, with all the uncertainties of his position."

"I might. I am not sure — for I know not Love. Still, I have a presentiment that I shall never marry Lord Medway — why, I cannot tell. Do you believe in presentiments?"

"I see no reason for not doing so. A good man or a good woman is allied to the heavenly intelligences — only a little lower than the angels. Why should they not be informed and

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

impressed by their allies? I have a presentiment that I shall in the end marry Steve; and yet my reason is against it. What does Mrs. Lloyd think about your marriage with Lord Medway?"

"She is very much opposed to it. She does not wish me to go so far away from her. Father says —"

At that moment the door opened, and Mr. Lloyd entered the room. He was much pleased to find Jessie there, and said, "I was going to write a few lines to your brother, and tell him how much I approved his last paper in *The Forum*. It was a lucid and forcible argument. I should like to have a conversation with him. Can he dine with me on Monday? Tell him I shall have two or three gentlemen present who are of his way of thinking."

"I will give John your message, sir. I am sure he will be pleased to accept your invitation."

This courtesy made quite an excitement in the McAslin home. Mrs. McAslin thought, "Nicholas still remembers. He favours my children because he has not forgotten the old days." John thought, "Mr. Lloyd is a sensible man. He may be covetous and selfish, but on the financial aspect of national affairs he holds sound opinions." Mr. McAslin said with some

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

pride, "Well, children, we may not be rich, but the McAslins are of the best blood in Scotland. If we look back on our history, John is like a page out of a romance. My page has been but a dull and difficult one, but who can tell what adventures and what good fortune may come to John?"

If John had any presentiment of an adventure, he kept it still in his heart, and when Monday arrived, prepared for his visit with an air of real, or affected, unconcern. He said it was "unfortunate Jessie could not go with him;" and Jessie answered: —

"Monday is the one impossible day in the week for me. I have pupils until after the last train for Lloyd's Station that is available for the dinner hour — and pupils are of more importance than a social entertainment; so you will have to go without my protection, John."

When we cross the threshold of a strange house, it is always an event to be noticed. Nothing of perceptible importance may follow; and again, our footsteps may be full of fate, and leading us on a road from which there is no return. John crossed the Lloyd threshold with every feeling held in abeyance, and yet at high tension. He knew nothing of the ground he was on; but he was alert, and watchful of himself; and in that neutral mood of equi-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

poise which is ready to accommodate itself to whatever is pleasant and equally ready to repel whatever is antagonistic.

Mr. Lloyd met him cordially. He had two gentlemen with him, — Mr. Moran, a wealthy capitalist, and Max Lehman, a fiery advocate of Karl Marx's opinions. They soon fell into a lively discussion, and John was particularly interested in Max Lehman. He had heard of him often. He was associated, in his mind, with East-side sweating shops and Trades halls, and all other places where dissatisfied labour congregated. The argument, dropped for a few moments at John's entrance, was soon renewed.

"I am for the transfer of land and capital, and of all the material and instruments of production, from the individual to the state. The government ought to organise labour," said Lehman, curtly.

"If the government organised labour," answered Mr. Moran, "it would soon come to a square fight between the government and the working classes; that is, if they imposed upon the government as some do upon their present employers."

"They would not impose on the government. They would be willing that the government should hold property that they are not willing

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

to have in private hands. Proudhon's famous saying that property is robbery, is not far from the truth."

"I admire your frankness, Mr. Lehman," said Lloyd. "You would then do away with capitalists?"

"It was understood that I was to speak frankly when I accepted your invitation. As for capitalists, yes, I would do away with them; they are by no means necessary adjuncts to capital. In every good business there is a surplus value. This surplus is produced by the labourer, but it is intercepted by the capitalist, who gets it without paying for it. State organisation would do away with this element of personal selfishness and aggrandisement."

"Mr. Lehman," said John, "there is more than one kind of labour in any good business. You are supposing that there is only one kind — that of the hands. You are leaving out of account altogether that of the head. The inventor, the improver of processes, the discoverer of new markets, the whole work of management and direction, is paid for out of surplus values, and this mental work fully earns its payment. Without head work there would be little hand work, and one class of workers are as worthy of payment as the other."

"That is right," said Mr. Lloyd.

41

251



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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Besides," continued John, "it is very doubtful if the government would be any more liberal than the capitalist. Under present circumstances it gets its work done at the very lowest figure possible. How are you going to prevent buyers buying in the cheapest market?"

"Legislation, sir, will —"

"Legislation, Mr. Lehman," said John, "is out of the question. It is as much beyond legislation as are the fogs of the Atlantic. You cannot kill the capitalist goose and retain the income of the golden eggs. Say that legislation equalises capital to-day, who would make capital for the needs of the future? Men are not bees; if their honey was taken as soon as their hives were full, they would cease to make honey."

"The state would then take the place of the capitalist."

"No state could take the place of that great band of capitalists who, at this hour, are sustaining the industries of the country."

"It is a false condition. We want a fairer division of wealth. Capital and property are fatal to the equal rights of men. All should be equally well off."

"But to make all equally well off we shall have to vastly increase production. How is this to be done?"

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

"Organisation — communism — the diffusion of power will lead to the diffusion of wealth."

At this point a servant announced dinner, and the gentlemen rose; but as they went to the dining-room the conversation was continued — "Yes, sir, organisation and suffrage, as an experiment; if it fails —"

"What then?"

"We will try communism. Property is fatal to equality."

"Communism is fatal to liberty."

They were just within the door as John uttered the words. They fell from his lips with a force and conviction that left on his handsome face a very becoming dignity, and the next moment a beautiful woman stood before him. His eyes caught her eyes, and then Mr. Lloyd introduced his daughter to John. Both went through the same strange, vivid experience, but what it meant neither of them at the time knew or cared. They had simply found each other. The recognition was instantaneous; the greeting mutually happy and free from doubt; the influence on both distinctly exhilarating. Mr. Lloyd perceived nothing unusual in this meeting; the mystical mother was clearer-eyed. She saw in both faces a fine intangible revealing of something not yet known to themselves; she saw it in their smiles,

211

211 211 211



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

and in the quick, wide opening of their eyes, for the eyes are ever the leaders in love.

"This is the beginning of some predestined end," she thought; and through all the clash of contradiction and assertion she watched John with an interest he was quite unconscious of.

A conversation so absorbing to all parties could not be long interrupted by minor subjects. Mr. Lloyd praised his fine wines, as if their possession were a personal merit; but that subject raised little enthusiasm; and Max Lehman quickly returned to his communistic dreams. Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Moran put in occasional denials of his position, but John listened until the German Socialist had exhausted his argument. Then he spoke with a calm decision that had in it no element of fret or doubt.

"The destruction of capital and the transfer of land to the government—this, then, is what you want! But these things mean pillage, bloodshed, national madness, misery and ruin, not only to the rich and to the middle class, but most irretrievably of all to the poor. To teach the ignorant, the lazy, and the criminal that their property is plundered from them by the manufacturer and the capitalist is to turn partial distress into universal catastrophe."

"In the midst of so much poverty and wrong,

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

are we to sit still and do nothing, John McAslin?" asked Lehman, passionately.

"God forbid!" John answered, with an equal fervour. "There is work enough for all to do. But is it not better to cut off the causes than to dally over effects?"

"That is what the Socialists desire to do."

"No; they flatter or they madden their audiences. They do not dare to tell them that a great deal of their misery is caused by their own laziness and vice. They harangue against the sins and self-indulgence of the rich; they have not the courage to point out the sins and vices of the poor—their thriftlessness, their disgracefully early and improvident marriages, and above all, their drunkenness."

"They are no worse than others."

"They profess to be better, and they are not, and you know they are not. The poor clergyman and the poor clerk are thrifty. In many cases they make no more than the skilled workman, yet they bring up their families decently and live within their narrow means. When wages are high do the working classes save for a bad time? No, they are not only extravagant, they are wasteful. They do not seem to realise that luxury and extravagance are as bad in the poor as in the rich. In the middle classes a man does not marry until he can support a

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

wife and family; a labourer will marry on a dollar, take his wife into squalid, crowded rooms, and bring into the world such stunted, wretched children as, in the terrible language of South, are 'not so much born as damned into the world.' But drunkenness is the master fiend of their poverty and distress; and drunkenness is in itself a whole world of sin. If there were no other sin, it would be sufficient to bring to us every calamity. Communism will not make the poor man thrifty, self-denying, and sober; on the contrary, it would increase his extravagance and self-indulgence and intemperance."

"At any rate, it would be well to try the effect of more money and more leisure on him."

"You have not considered that there is a destiny in riches, and that they are beyond our control. Riches do not come by chance or by accident. And I, for one, do not consider the possession of great wealth an enviable condition. No thoughtful man would do so."

"For what reason?" asked Mr. Lloyd.

"Because of the responsibility attached to it, — a responsibility not to be shirked, and for which there will be a strict accounting. Wealth is blessed and honourable, when the holders of it understand that they are the stewards of it, and not the owners. God gives wealth to be employed in good and great deeds."

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

"But if rich men add million to million, for their own glory and pleasure, what then, Mr. McAslin?"

It was Mrs. Lloyd who asked this question, and her soft, even voice had a singular thrilling quality. It penetrated, as soft rain penetrates the earth; and there was a moment's pause ere John answered: —

"You have doubtless read, madam, what St. James says of such men. 'Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are rotted, and your garments moth-eaten.'"

"Then," said Mr. Moran, replying to John's remark, "it is a kind of calamity to be rich, if to riches is attached a constant care of the poor. Who wants such a disagreeable responsibility?"

"Nevertheless," answered John, "the rich man is responsible, always and absolutely. *There is no such thing as irresponsible riches!* They may be buried in real estate, or in bonds, or hidden away in the vaults of the Chemical Bank; but their owner will have to render an account of their usage, even to the uttermost farthing, and that to One who cannot be imposed upon."

"So! So!" cried Max Lehman. "This is very good. If this be your Christian Social-

21

22



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

ism, I like it! I had no hope that you were so wide-awake and so sympathetic."

"The poor never had a greater friend than Christ; and there are few men more wide-awake to existing conditions than the Christian clergy of the present day."

"I cannot believe that," replied Lehman, scornfully.

"You must believe their own declarations. The Bishop of Winchester predicts a tornado, generated by the 'zones of enormous wealth and degrading poverty.' Cardinal Manning declares that 'the world of capital is combining in alarm against the world of labour.' Cardinal Gibbons warns us 'of a struggle, the signs of which fill us with disquiet; because the thirst for wealth is daily more insatiable; and the cries of the distressed more poignant and violent.' 'Lazarus,' says the Rev. Mr. Hughes, 'is no longer lying on the doorsteps of Dives, in the quiescence of sullen despair; he is vehemently gesticulating to hungry men at the corners of the streets.' Bishop Berry says, 'The working classes are now demanding that Christianity should be tried by its power to serve the welfare—physical, intellectual, and moral—of the great mass of men;' and the Bishop of Derry says, 'What there is in the Gospel to rectify the relations of human life, to elevate

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

the selfishness of capital and chasten the selfishness of labour, *that* will find eager listeners. But to the men of the near future, religion will appear a barren and worthless thing, unless it bear the fruits of human love."

Lehman looked irresolutely at the two ladies. He wished to launch out his most extreme opinions on religion and social limitations, but was restrained by the saintly, introspective face of Mrs. Lloyd, and equally so by the sympathy in the girlish countenance of Alice. It was a relief to him when Mrs. Lloyd stood up and said to John: "Sir, I am glad to have heard you. If I have been a careless steward hitherto, I will err no more." Then Alice rose, and John rose also, and opening the door he stood by it until the ladies had passed out of the room. It was a wonderful experience to him. The sway and movement of Alice's gown deliciously troubled his senses; and her sweet, shy glance of recognition for service went to his heart like wine.

Lehman attacked him vehemently as soon as the restraining influence of the ladies was removed,—Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Moran patiently encouraged his diatribe; they wished to hear what extremities his class held in reserve, and were not astonished to learn that if Communism was not possible, they were quite will-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

ing to try "barricades and bayonets." Yet even to these two men, who had practically made gold their God, there was something terrible in the wholesale abrogation of every divine claim and social restriction; and they were glad to hear John's impetuous, ardent denial of all Lehman's assertions.

"You are blindly mistaken, Max Lehman," he said. "There is no nation on the earth willing to be without God, and without his worship. Will men indeed ever give up their idea of home, and purity, and their belief in all goodness? Will men ever cease to love their parents, and their wives and children, and to respect all good women? No! No! No! A thousand times, No!"

As John uttered these words, Mr. Moran took out his watch, and with a sombre, hurried manner said he "must hurry away, in order to get a train;" and Lehman also remembered that he "had an engagement." Then Mr. Lloyd said he would drive both gentlemen to the station; and John proposed to accompany them, but this his host would not permit. "I wish you very much to remain," he said. "I have some particular business to talk over with you. I dare say you will find Mrs. and Miss Lloyd in the next room, and they will be pleased with your company for an hour, I know."

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

The sound of a piano very softly played led him to the apartment. Alice was alone with her dreamy, inconsequent music, and she stopped suddenly at John's entrance. Then they fell naturally into a conversation about Jessie, and the musical world in general, illustrating the opinions and likings by a verse or a few bars from the song or piece in discussion. Nothing puts two strangers so readily and so surely at ease as music, and there was indeed a most enthralling and dangerous power in the small courtesies and guarded familiarities of the position in which John and Alice found themselves. Their hands frequently touched on the ivory keys; when John bent forward to scan or to turn an unknown page, he could not escape the sense of delicious nearness, and in the blending of their voices they were conscious of a still more subtle and delightful consonance.

Finally, as Alice was looking through a musical folio for a song she wanted, John asked, "What melody were you playing as I entered? It was full of sadness. Why were you playing it? For it really sounded as if it were an interpretation."

"I do not know what it was. I was simply playing an accompaniment to my thoughts. And as they were on the subject you had been talking of during the dinner hour, is there any wonder if they were sad? I should think if

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Socialism has any music, it must be of the most melancholy kind."

"Oh, no!" he answered, with a radiant face, "Christian Socialism has divined its triumph and is already singing of it. If you will permit me, I can let you hear how it sings."

Then Alice gave place with a smile that set John's heart singing, and he struck the keys in a few masterful chords. And nothing is more remarkable than the way in which men acquire music. Women spend years in its study and practice and achieve but small results; men never take regular lessons, but "pick up" the knowledge at odd hours, and yet in some occult way attain a skill that is instantly recognised.

As soon as John evoked those few distinct, forceful unisons, Alice knew he could make her piano say whatever he wished it to say. Then his voice joined the rhythmical march of melody, and William Morris's famous inquiry was in her ears:—

What is this dread sound and rumour? What is this that all men hear?

Like the wind in hollow valleys, when the storm is drawing near,

Like the rolling of the ocean, in the eventide of fear?

'T is the people marching on!

Hark! the rolling of the thunder,

Lo the sun, and lo thereunder,

Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,

And the host comes marching on!

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

The words went in swinging, ringing phrases to the grand, magnetic, prophetic music of "John Brown," and the enthusiasm with which they were sung kindled in Alice a like warmth of feeling. Unconsciously she leaned towards the singer, just as the sunflower sways to the sun.

They had forgotten time and place and social circumstances; they were but two young, sympathetic hearts, full of the same noble regrets and hopes for humanity, and as yet not aware that their love and pity for all suffering and oppressed had found a personal interpretation of its unselfish sweetness in their own mutual regard.

Only for a few minutes were they permitted this memorable experience. As John finished the first verse, Mr. Lloyd opened the door of the parlour, and there was an instantaneous chill and change. John struck the last chord into discord, and rose with a slight embarrassment, for Mr. Lloyd's face was dark with disapproval and he said sharply:—

"That is a good song for a Labour Meeting, but hardly for a girl's parlour. Alice, your mother wishes to see you. You need not return, for Mr. McAslin and I have now some business to arrange."

She went away depressed and saddened. A

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

few moments before she would have given John her hand and a kind "good night," but her father's words and manner had taken all light and confidence out of her heart. She bowed slightly, and with a sense of wrong went slowly upstairs. Her mother had not wished to see her. That message was a fabrication to secure her absence. Why had her father thought it necessary? Had her face, her manner, or her voice betrayed more interest than he approved?

Mrs. Lloyd expressed no surprise and asked no questions. She was not, according to her usual custom, seated before her window looking off into space and lost in reveries of mystical devotion. She was walking restlessly about the room, with her hands dropped and clasped in front. Her face had lost its quiescent look, the placid pool of her soul had at last been troubled.

"If it is all true, Alice!" she said in a voice low and tremulous with emotion,—"if it is all true, what shall we do to be saved? I cannot sleep. I dare not sleep. I have tried to keep in the Way of Holiness and not to let the sight or even the thought of sin come near my soul. And what if this should be the Way of Selfishness? You must leave me to-night. I have to answer this question to my Maker, and I do not

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

know how I am to answer it;" and she suddenly covered her face with her hands in an abandonment of contrition.

Alice was not sorry to be dismissed. The questioning and anxiety of an awakened conscience were not at that hour interesting. Her own heart was tossed to and fro, and tumultuously demanding consideration. She went to her room without a word of protest, and for a few minutes sat there motionless. Then she rose and locked the door. She wanted some tangible evidence that she was alone with the great problem it was now imperatively necessary for her to settle, and that at once. Its consideration drew her brows together and set her mouth firm and tight, as she went about disrobing. Not a muscle of her face moved, not a smile brightened its sombre air of perplexed thought, as she folded away her gown and then uncoiled her long, brown hair. Many times during this occupation her mind and feelings dominated her so entirely that her hands ceased their duty and fell listlessly to her knees. For a while there would be an utter unconsciousness of this action, then suddenly she would force herself to resume her toilet, only once more to fall into an idle reverie. And yet, evidently, during this semi-lapse of physical consciousness, she was in a state of abnormal mental activity.

41

22



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

In fact, she was probing her heart that night as severely and truthfully as her mother was probing her conscience.

In about half an hour it had come to a question of argument, and she talked back to herself with a constantly increasing sense of right, and a constantly increasing determination to do right. Then her actions became more rapid and alert, and her face more expressive. She abruptly ceased brushing her hair and pinned it quickly into its usual night coil. All her other preparations for sleep were promptly accomplished, and she finally turned the key of her jewel case, and began to drop into it the sparkling rings that shone upon her fingers. A letter lay, with an almost offensive prominence, upon the uppermost velvet cushion. She looked at it fixedly as she let ring after ring fall into its place — then she lifted the crested paper, and tore it with slow decision into many pieces.

The letter was from Lord Medway.

We know but little of any event from its mere name. Mr. Lloyd, in inviting John McAslin and Max Lehman as representatives of two distinct methods for the regeneration of society, called the meeting a dinner. But the appellation in no way fitted the circumstance, and its results were very different from what had been intended.

A STRANGE DINNER PARTY

Their effect upon Mrs. Lloyd was quickly evident. When she came down to breakfast the following morning even her husband glanced at her with curiosity. She looked as if some one had rudely wakened her from sleep. There was the same startled expression, the same trembling uncertainty, with that forced alertness which gradually settles into vigilant attendance — the whole attitude making a very marked contrast to her usual abstracted manner.

No notice, however, was taken of the change during the meal. She asked if Mr. McAslin was to eat it with them, and Mr. Lloyd answered: "No; he returned to New York by a very early train. I have engaged him as my confidential secretary, and he may now, therefore, be frequently in the house. I advise both you and Alice to talk very little to him, and not to talk at all to him on the subject introduced last night. It is not one for women to inquire into."

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CHAPTER V

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

MR. LLOYD had spoken gruffly, and with a decision they both understood and generally respected; though at this hour, had he cared to look at the people whom he advised, he would have been doubtful of their acquiescence. For at his words an electric spark leaped into Alice's eyes, a vivid colour flashed to her cheeks, and she assumed the erect air of one ready for an encounter, though she did not attempt to provoke it. Mrs. Lloyd also remained silent, but Alice saw on her face an unusual expression, one which impressed her with the idea of an invincible purpose that might be delayed and opposed, but which would, in the end, be unconquerable. She remembered, when a child, seeing the same look constantly on her mother's face. It meant then the determined resolve to escape from the material world into the spiritual one, and she speculated as she drank her coffee as to what its meaning might be in the present case.

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

After the breakfast had been removed, Mrs. Lloyd, with the suddenness of one who knows she touches dangerous ground and is yet determined to go on, said, —

"Nicholas, I wish to see my lawyer."

If she had fired a pistol at her husband he could hardly have been more unpleasantly startled. "What the mischief do you want with him?" he demanded, flinging the daily paper to the floor.

"I have a great deal of business with him. It is a long time since I went over my affairs. I want to know how they stand — how much money I have — how much more I am likely to have — and so on."

"'And so on?' What does that mean?"

"Simply that I want to know whether he is doing right or wrong, whether my money is being put to good uses or bad."

"Ho! ho! You have got McAslin's 'stewardship' on your brain, I see. Well, now, get rid of that nonsense at once. I suppose, however, you will have to see Telford; for of course you will wish to settle something on Alice at her marriage. Lord Medway and I have come at last to an understanding on financial matters. Have you considered the subject? Are you prepared to name the exact sum? Such a decision will be necessary immediately; at any

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

rate before the antenuptial contract is drawn up."

"Father! Father!"

"What is it, Alice?"

"Are you talking of my marriage?"

"You know very well that I am talking of it."

"To Lord Medway?"

"Of course."

"I have made up my mind not to marry Lord Medway. I do not like being bargained about. Am I so very disagreeable that you are willing to give a stranger and a foreigner a large sum of money to take me away from you?"

"I am giving a large sum of money for your benefit and ennobling. I am buying you an earldom, and all its honours and privileges."

"You are buying me a husband, and he is costing you millions. Of the two transactions, I would rather be sold for millions. It would be less humiliating to have a husband give millions for me, than for you to give millions in order to induce some titled foreigner to marry me. I do not want an earldom, and I have fully determined to be neither bought nor sold."

"You look very handsome when you are in a temper, Alice; but your determination is a little too late. I have already promised you. The affair is being talked of throughout the financial and fashionable world. You cannot

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

now draw back. It is impossible. There would be a certain amount of personal disgrace in it, and more humiliation than either you or I would like to face."

"Mother, what do you say?" Alice asked the question without any hope of her mother's interference. She was accustomed to see her retire from all disputes and quarrelsome decisions, and she was, therefore, amazed to hear her answer,—

"Unless you love Lord Medway I think you will do wrong to marry him."

"I do not love him."

"Then, let me tell you, Alice," said Mr. Lloyd, "you have behaved shamefully to the young man. You accepted his attentions and permitted him to write to you. I am confounded by your behaviour, which places me also in a false and shameful position. I am not going to allow a foolish notion to ruin your life! Nor will I allow you to make a fool of me! I have gone to no end of trouble to secure your future, and I shall take very good care that you fulfil your part of our obligation to Lord Medway."

"I have no part in any obligation to Lord Medway."

"You have. Actions speak as well as a written bond. You have accepted Medway's

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

attentions — yes, miss, accepted them with smiles, and now you propose to jilt the man you have allured on to a false position."

"Jilt! Allured! Nicholas, you ought not to use such words to your daughter."

"She ought not to deserve them."

"I do not deserve them. You asked me to receive Lord Medway, and try to like him. I received him as I would any other guest of yours. At first I even thought it might be possible to do as you wished me. I was dazzled, as any young girl might be, by his title, and by the new life I might share with him. But I never suffered him to see that I was influenced by these thoughts. We walked, and drove, and spent some hours together every day, of course; but common hospitality to a guest demanded so much attention and courtesy."

"He made love to you, and you accepted it."

"He said such pretty words as young men say to young women whom they wish to please — for the sake of millions of money. I accepted his compliments at my own valuation — which was less than nothing at all."

"He has not written you love letters?"

"He has written me two letters, both within the last four days; that is, since he was satisfied with the premium you have promised him if he will only marry me. I answered

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

neither of the letters. I have destroyed both of them."

"Nicholas," said Mrs. Lloyd, "we know what a loveless marriage means. Surely you will spare —"

He would listen no longer. With a rude anger he turned away, muttering, even while he put on his hat and overcoat, expressions of his passion and determination that were more forcible than considerate or refined. Left alone, a sudden silence fell between mother and daughter. Alice went to the window, and looked out with that vacant gaze which perceives nothing. All her being was swallowed up in feeling. Mrs. Lloyd sat pondering the new perplexity that had forced itself into her already disturbed mind. She was little used to taking the initiative, and the force of habit, added to her uncertainty, made her now wait for Alice to open the conversation. Alice waited for sympathy; she was hurt that it did not flow to her with a quick spontaneity, and when she did speak it was in a tone of indignant injury.

"Thank God!" she cried, "men can no longer bargain their daughters away like cattle. Mother, I wonder you could bear it! Why did you not tell father that I was free born, and a citizen of no mean country? I

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

will marry no man unless I wish to marry him. If I love him and he loves me, I will give up everything and dare everything, and bear everything for him. I want to be loved. I want to be loved more than any other thing. I never have been much loved. Father loves nothing but money, and I am not good enough for you to love, dear mother. You pity me, and you pray for me, but how can you love me?"

"Oh, Alice! Alice! Do not say such cruel words."

"Are they not true?"

"No! No! I love you with all my soul."

"Then talk to me, and advise me, and comfort me. Have I not the right to love and to be loved? Did you not marry for love? Yes, you did; for you were very rich and father was poor then. You must have loved him!"

"There ought to be love on both sides, Alice, or else there is sorrow enough for both. I loved, indeed, but when love is continually thrown back upon itself, it dies; it dies cruelly hard, but it dies."

"Forgive me, darling mother! Have I made you cry? Oh, how I despise my selfishness! I see it all now. Father has never loved you, he cares for nothing but his business, nor for any one but those who can help his schemes in some way; no, not even Steve, the dear, noble

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

boy, whom he takes no trouble to understand. I see, I see at this hour, the long, loveless years that you have lived; the sad doubting, and fearing, and hoping, and final despairing. How did you bear it? I wonder you did not die."

"I did not die because in my great sorrow I found within myself internal light and strength that the world knows nothing of."

"I have not found that, and I must come to you. Shall I marry Lord Medway because father says I must?"

"You are the keeper of your own heart and conscience, Alice. Do what they tell you to do. Never throw your decisions on others; at the last you will take your desire or suffer in its want."

"Is it wrong to love?"

"It is right to love. Nearly always some unknown force draws a girl to the one man in the world for her."

"Hardly any one now believes in that experience, mother."

"Yet it is the only divine right on earth. When people do not believe in it, it is because they are incapable of such a grand passion, or else unwilling to abide with it; for you must know, Alice, that love in some way or other always demands the austere sweetness of sacri-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

fice. And so few dare to try the blessedness of 'giving up.'"

"Mother, I want you to stand by me in this matter. I do not want money; I want love. Please do not send for Mr. Telford on my account."

"I am not sending for him on your account. There has been a revolution in my soul during the past night, Alice. The words I heard yesterday from the two men at the dinner-table put all my spiritual nature in disquietude and distress. I perceived that I had been a very selfish worshipper of God and goodness. And just before dawn this morning a more excellent way was shown me. I intend to take it at once. I shall want money in order to do so. I shall want a great deal of money. But if my affairs have been handled honestly, I ought to have more than sufficient, and I believe they have."

"Mr. Telford is a good man. Grandfather Valliante trusted him implicitly. Mother, what must I do about Lord Medway? What will be father's next move in the matter?"

"I think it will be to bring him out here. In that case, I would be perfectly polite—and perfectly honest. You must wait for events, you cannot force them."

To the young heart full of feeling, this wait-

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

ing for events is the great trial. Alice wished for Lord Medway's arrival, in order that she might at once put an end to his hopes, and her own connection with them. But that day not a person of any kind called, and the hours went by with an exhausting monotony. It was, however, some comfort to anticipate Jessie's visit the following morning. She was sure Jessie would approve her rebellion. Jessie always admired women who had the necessary courage to stand by their wishes or their opinions. But Jessie heard Alice's confidence with a face that quite dashed her, and with a silence that was most unlike Jessie's usual readiness to advise or sympathise. Alice was at last forced to a direct question.

"Have I not done wisely, Jessie?" she asked.

"I don't think you have. If you wish my opinion, I think you have acted very foolishly. What excuse have you for throwing away so much?"

"I throw away Lord Medway because I do not love him."

"Do you love any one else?"

"I do not know."

"And yet you give up a coronet for something so intangible you don't know whether you have it or not. Mr. Lloyd has reason to

11

2000



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

be angry with you. Think of what people will say. No one will believe for a moment that you refused Lord Medway; they will look on you with that contempt maids all forlorn and maids deserted get from them. They will each render their own version of his Lordship's reasons for refusing to marry you—for only this morning I saw your marriage announced in all the principal papers."

"Jessie McAslin!"

"It is the truth."

"It is impossible! I have never given any one authority to make such a statement."

Jessie unfolded the morning paper she held in her hand, and Alice, to her utter consternation, saw her own and Lord Medway's portraits in united circles. The marriage was definitely spoken of as certain to occur during the summer, and some entirely gratuitous statements were made concerning the bride's age and requirements; her reputed fortune; the marvellous presents she was to receive, and the magnificent trousseau in preparation.

She read the article through with indignation, her tears fell fast and hot upon the offending paper. "It is my father's doing," she said. "He thinks after this public report of it I will be compelled to acquiesce. I will do nothing of the kind."

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

"I am sorry you cannot persuade yourself to accept good fortune. Most girls would marry a much less desirable man for the sake of his title?"

"I think Alice Lloyd just as pretty a name as Lady Medway," was the reply. "To be an American girl is distinction enough. What worth is there in a title?"

"No worth at all," said Jessie, "but titles are like the feathers in a cock's tail, or the ruffles 'round a girl's neck; they are ornamental and please the majority. All the way here this morning I have been dreaming so pleasantly of your marriage. I wish you were going to be Lady Medway."

"Why should you wish that?"

"Oh! I may as well confess that my reasons were thoroughly selfish ones. I expected pleasure and *éclat* from the event. I hoped in some humble fashion to take part in it, and I thought, perhaps, if I managed a trip to England in a year or two, you would invite me to visit you. There! there! I have told the truth, and the whole truth, for once. Not many girls would have been so honest. Let us go to our music lesson now."

"Just a moment—I think you are in love with that handsome fellow you call Steve Morrison?"

41

201



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Suppose I am; what then?"

"Would you give him up for Lord Medway, or any other lord? Would you? Tell me the truth, and the whole truth, once more."

Jessie dropped her eyes and held her chin reflectively. She evidently desired to return a truthful answer, and Alice waited patiently for it. In a few minutes it was ready. The eyes of the girls met, a smile rippled over Jessie's face, and she said with a frank decisiveness, —

"No; I would not."

Then Alice laughed joyously as she answered, "I thought you were better than your words. Now, if you like, we will go to the piano."

Alice was quite right in attributing the public avowal of her marriage to her father. Nicholas Lloyd was a wise man where money was in question; he was a foolish man where women were concerned. He had one fixed standard for them, not understanding that one standard will not at all times measure even one woman! There are so many women in one woman! He had left his wife and daughter on the previous day in a mood of great irritation, but their opposition affected him in no other way. Extremely sensitive to public opinion himself, he found it impossible to believe in the indifference of Alice to a power he so cringingly respected. The idea of announcing her forthcoming mar-

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

riage struck him in the cars, and he considered it a remarkably clever one. Indeed, many wondered that morning at the serene smile of satisfaction on his countenance, and some of the knowing ones predicted the condition of certain stocks from it.

As soon as he reached the city he sent to the family photographer and procured some late portraits of his daughter. He put them in a conspicuous position on his private desk. He expected Lord Medway to call, and about noon that gentleman arrived. He read over the draft of the papers relative to his marriage and to Alice's fortune, and expressed his perfect satisfaction, adding cheerfully: —

"There is nothing, now, Mr. Lloyd, to prevent me wooing my bride, and fixing the date of the ceremony as early as I can persuade her to make me happy."

"Nothing but Miss Lloyd's consent," answered the father, with a touch of sarcasm; for his pride in both his money and his daughter was offended by the young man's air of easy acceptance. "Miss Lloyd astonished and annoyed me very much yesterday by asserting her right to choose her own husband, and her disinclination to accept you in that capacity."

"But why does she now object to me?"

"Girls are queer," he answered musingly.

41

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Her pride is roused. She talks about marrying for love, and for love only. I thought Alice was a thoroughly up-to-date girl, and then as soon as marriage is named she is as full of sentiment and romance as women have always been. I don't know what to make of it, nor yet what is to be done."

Medway looked much troubled. He was not a mercenary young man, in the worst sense of the word, but he had thought of Mr. Lloyd's millions, and of Mr. Lloyd's daughter, until they had become part and parcel of his life and estate. Also he had talked of his good fortune to both his friends and his creditors, and he could not bear to think of the scornful doubts which would surely follow his disappointment.

Lloyd perceived his perplexity and divined its cause, and he so played upon the young noble's chagrin and fears that he was willing to do anything to consummate so desirable a marriage. Then Lloyd lifted his daughter's picture, looked at it with thoughtful speculation, and asked Medway if he had any of himself. "You see," he continued, "if your pictures were published together, and the marriage formally announced, it would be next to an impossible thing for Alice to decline it. She could hardly bear to go into society again if it were broken off."

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

"To force the young lady into marriage by such means would be a cruelty," Medway answered. "I could not do it. There must be some other way," — yet even while he was making this disclaimer he was considering that a public announcement of this kind would exonerate him from any suspicion of trying to deceive or of trading on a lie, even if the affair did finally fall through.

Mr. Lloyd smiled at his scruple. He did not understand a man who was not ready and willing to accomplish his ends and serve himself by any sure means within his power. "Alice's hesitations," he affirmed, "were simply a girl's romantic fancies." He was certain that the man who dared boldly to put them out of consideration would, in the end, win her love and gratitude for his courage and wisdom. "Besides," he added, "if you think it best, lay the whole blame on me. If it be a fault to make a daughter accept a great fortune, then I will take the blame. It is mine, and I am proud to take it. Allow me to manage this affair. I know Alice Lloyd better than you do. I know the sex also. Nothing pleases a woman more than to be forced into doing the thing she has already determined in her own heart to do."

"Shall I call on her to-day?"

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"To-morrow will be better. Send me down immediately some of your photos. I will, in the meantime, give instructions to reporters, and to-morrow morning Miss Lloyd will find herself absolutely committed to a marriage that she will be proud enough of, as soon as she understands it is inevitable. Why, it will bring her everything a woman desires, even that perpetual sympathy which is the sweetest of feminine morsels. She will cry a little to all her friends as she shows her finery, and say 'she is being forced into matrimony,' and they will condole with her and envy her at the same time. That is a kind of bitter-sweet that women enjoy so much that they easily reconcile themselves to its occasion."

"It is not a very honourable transaction."

"It is perfectly honourable. You cannot do with women as with men. They don't understand a straightforward manner, for they are a crooked sex. After your marriage you can tell Alice all about it, and she will smile at our clever diplomacy. Anyway and all ways are fair in love."

And Nicholas Lloyd really thought so. His moral character, by constant wear and tear in the money market, had become thin, tentative, and provisional. It spoke, or it was silent, at his pleasure. But yet he did not like the

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

thought of meeting Alice, and he concluded to take his new secretary home with him. His presence would be a restraint, and the first explanation be softened by the social necessity of control in the company of strangers.

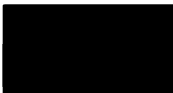
Alice thought this meeting with her father to be extremely important, and she came into the dining-room with the offending paper in her hand. Her eyes bore the traces of her weeping, her face was white and troubled, and yet there was an air of pride and anger in her address that seemed likely to assert itself above all conventionalities. She saw John at her entrance, and a flash of feeling, clear and swift as light, passed between them. His presence, however, did not deter her from the inquiry she intended to put to her father. She touched her father lightly on the arm, and he looked up from a letter he was reading, and said with an affectation of pleasant surprise:—

"Ah! then, it is you at last. Now we can have dinner. Is your mother coming downstairs?"

"Mother is coming, and dinner is ready; but, father, first of all, you must look at this;" and she put the paper into his hand.

"So you have seen the report?" he said. "Well, what about it?"

"What about it? Everything wrong and



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

shameful about it. I expect you to punish the makers of such lies."

"Lies? Nonsense! It is, perhaps, a little premature. McAslin, how do these reporting fellows catch on to things?"

"Generally some one tells them, sir."

"And my picture, too, father, — how did they get it?"

"From the photographer, I suppose. Come, my dear, I am hungry, and I don't want my dinner spoiled by silly complaining. Most girls would like to be so—"

"Placarded! No, indeed, they would not. It has nearly broken my heart. I am so mortified—so indignant—"

"Oh, rubbish! Don't be foolish, Alice. You can't help it. Nobody blames you. I have seen Medway, and he is quite pleased at the compliment."

"Oh! Perhaps it was his doing. I will never speak to him again. I will not permit myself to be compromised into marriage. People may say what they like. I won't! I won't!"

"Mr. McAslin, give your arm to Miss Lloyd. We will have dinner before controversy." Mrs. Lloyd entered as he spoke, and he immediately joined her and proceeded to the dining-room. "We can discuss the matter later in the even-

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

ing, Alice," he said, turning his head to make the remark, which he did with an unusual gracious indifference, as if it were a subject of little moment.

Alice then accepted the requirements of the hour, for further discussion at that time would have involved the taking of the servants into the family confidence. So she allowed a smile to brighten her face, and became suddenly lovely, for the sole reason that she suddenly knew herself beloved. How did she know it? How does the flower know when the sun shines? John did not say a word; he did not even dare to glance into her face, but she knew he loved her. There was a silent, secret understanding between his soul and her soul. Perhaps their angels had confidences, and had agreed upon the marriage. Or perhaps Love had always stood waiting at the door of their hearts, and the very moment a glance set it on the latch he had entered. Yet, though both were conscious of their guest, neither had yet dared to say, "Welcome, beloved! Come in, and dwell with me."

It was to Mr. Lloyd's interest to keep the conversation as far as possible from society affairs, — from newspapers, dress, marriage, and the like; but so few subjects, except money and the relations of money, ever entered his mind

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

that he could think of nothing to say. There was a short silence, in which every one was extremely self-conscious and uncomfortable; then Mrs. Lloyd broke the embarrassing pause by an inquiry about Max Lehman; and Mr. Lloyd took an immediate advantage of the question. Any subject far enough from Lord Medway was welcome, — even Socialism.

"Lehman," he said, "is a passionate, violent man, is he not, Mr. McAslin?"

"He is of the people, and for the people, sir; but he is at least sincere."

"Perhaps, but sincerity is not truth. Error of the worst kind is often sincere. He has a bold voice and a few taking phrases, and these things go a long way with such audiences as Lehman has; in fact, they go all the way."

"I cannot say that," answered John. "The people whom he addresses are mostly poor and distressed, and like all sufferers they are looking for a remedy."

"There is no suffering and no want that is not cared for in the city of New York. Look at our hospitals, schools, libraries, charities of all kinds and descriptions."

"But, Mr. Lloyd," said John, "these very things convict our social condition of its sins; they are the medicine of disease, not the bread of life. The mere giving of money is not suf-

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

ficient if we are morally blind; we must do as Lehman does, enter into the feelings and sufferings of others. Then our emotions will enlighten our understandings, and we shall try to prevent rather than to cure."

Mrs. Lloyd looked at John with a face so eager, so full of question and desire, that even her husband was astonished by its unusual expression. "To prevent!" she cried. "Oh, if we only could! But how is it to be done?"

"There are so many ways possible to the rich."

"That is so easily said. If you could be more specific!"

"I can. I think a rich man should set himself some one great and possible work. He could rebuild some of the worst parts of the city, and give to the poor homes in which it was possible for them to live cleanly and virtuously. He could found a university in which there should be absolutely free tuition, and no one could compute how much this one good deed would change the world in a single generation. He could keep the House of Legislature pure —"

"Oh! oh! Come now, Mr. McAslin! you are magnifying the power of gold in the wrong direction."

"No, Mr. Lloyd," replied John McAslin,

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"I am not. A great fortune could keep the house pure by supplying funds for prosecutions. If members knew they would be called to account for bribery and corruption, for perjury and for every malfeasance of office, small and great, they would not render themselves liable to indictment. A great fortune could found free libraries in a large number of villages, and it is from healthy, intelligent villages that our large cities ought to be reinforced. A great fortune could found local hospitals sufficient for every need. Oh, there are so many ways, all equally noble and necessary, so many things that rich men could do, and be happy in the doing, — far more happy than they are in collecting pictures or indulging themselves in luxury, or in simply amassing money."

"You are laying the regeneration of society and the elevation of the poor upon the rich," said Mrs. Lloyd. "It is too great a work for any class. Religion is the only power able for it. Suppose we denied ourselves to the uttermost, and gave all we possessed to the poor?"

"It would be as nothing without charity."

"But is not giving up everything charity?"

"No, indeed! The rich man must give himself as well as his gold. If he wants to taste the greatest blessing in the world, to know beforehand the very happiness of heaven, he must

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

live for others. There is no true happiness till this law is fulfilled, and the vainest of things is to dream that denying self will do as well. To die to self we must live for others."

"I do not understand."

"We must feel with others, be touched by their suffering, and busy for their happiness. We must do as Christ did, lay our hands upon the poor, and even the leper, and not stand afar off and throw them a piece of gold."

"But that is the business of the church."

"Mrs. Lloyd, the church of the past is dying now of its own respectability; the church of the future must make the divine secular, and the secular divine."

"But how?"

"It must cover the whole ground of ordinary life, with its multitude of interests and requirements. It is a miserably selfish religion which busies itself about what will happen when we die, which goes to church and repeats creeds, and totally ignores the great law of human brotherhood set forth by Christ as the very rule of his Kingdom."

"The world has got to be carried on, sir," said Mr. Lloyd, with a little temper, "and pray tell me, how is the law of human brotherhood to be brought into business? It is pure nonsense! Who cares for this 'brotherhood' ques-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

tion, when it is a matter of push, or the chance of making a corner, or of cutting prices, or of buying in the cheapest market? You may rant about equality, human brotherhood and liberty, but what does it amount to? There are no such things in the market-places of the world."

"Yet no one can deny that these very words represent the aspirations and hopes of untold millions. And if the church of the future does its duty, it will not leave a revolutionary press and atheistical expounders to be the only teachers to use them. The church of the future will take these magical words up in the name of God, and give to them their truest and noblest conception."

"Your sister Jessie, Mr. McAslin, has often said to me, 'My brother John ought to be a preacher.' I agree with her," said Alice. "You have an evident 'call' for this church of the future—the church that shall teach the brotherhood of men, liberty, and equality."

"There never can be any such thing as equality," said Mr. Lloyd.

"There is an equality and there is an inequality, and both are of the ordination of God. All men in his sight are of equal value. All, according to their ability, are equally responsible. But until men and women are born equally good and clever, equally healthy and

MEN PROPOSE, WOMEN DECIDE

industrious, inequality in this world must exist, and, indeed, as we advance in civilisation, it will be more and more in evidence."

"Then you admit at least one irremediable evil?" said Mr. Lloyd.

"I do not think this inequality an evil,—quite the contrary. Is it an evil in the family where the weakness of age, the helplessness of infancy, or the sickness of one of its members calls forth all that is beautiful and self-denying in love? Indeed it is not."

"You think, then, Mr. McAslin," said Mrs. Lloyd, "that the weak member of a family—I mean weak in any respect—ought to be continually pitied, borne with and helped?"

"I do."

"And what if he fails again and again?"

"He must be helped again and again. If there is some weakness to be borne with, there is always some good to be strengthened."

"Yes! yes! He must be helped again and again!" Her face flushed, her eyes were gleaming and tender.

But Mr. Lloyd rose up hastily, and with evident annoyance.

"Come! Come!" he said, "we have had enough, and more than enough of this. Let us go to the drawing-room, and Alice will give us some music." But he was not any happier

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

under the charm of song. In the midst of melody he could not keep Lord Medway out of his mind, nor yet look at his daughter without an uncomfortable feeling, though he kept privately assuring himself that he had only done his duty, and that in the long run Alice would thank him for doing it.

CHAPTER VI

"WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE?"

It was easy enough for Mr. Lloyd to reason himself out of everything he ought to believe and to feel; and while Alice and John were making melody, and forgetting all else, he slipped quietly out of the room. He wished to avoid any discussion about Lord Medway; for he believed that every hour the subject could be deferred would make it more manageable. There was a little room on the ground floor which he called his private office, and thither he retired. Alice had never ventured to trouble its selfish seclusion at any time, and he threw himself on a comfortable lounge with the easy reflection that he was safe at least for that night.

In less than half an hour he was amazed to see his wife intrude upon his privacy. Such an event was unprecedented. He was not prepared in any way for a visit so unusual, and he asked, with a show of anxiety, "Is any one ill? Is the house on fire? What remarkable thing has happened?"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"I have come to talk to you about Alice," she answered.

"This is a new departure," he said scornfully. "Since when have you begun to consider your daughter's affairs?"

"If I have appeared remiss in the past, there is no necessity to continue the error. I wish to spare Alice as much as possible; and I know any conversation about Lord Medway will be painful to her."

"Your duty is to talk to her on that very subject. Any other mother would do so."

"I might talk to her in a way you would not approve. If she does not love Lord—"

"Love! love! love! It is all women think of. I don't believe there is such a thing. I intend Alice to marry Lord Medway, whether she imagines herself in love with him or not. The business part of the alliance is satisfactorily completed; if you have any regard for Alice's future, you will persuade her to get through the sentimental part as soon as possible. The young man will not wait too long on her fancies; not even for the pile of money he gets with her."

"We know, Nicholas, what a loveless marriage means."

"Yes, we do. You are right there."

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

"Do you wish Alice to suffer all I have suffered?"

"You have chosen to imagine yourself ill-used. I can't help that. You have had everything a woman needs to make her happy."

"Everything but love. It would have been better if I had had love and wanted everything else. I insist upon Alice having perfect freedom in the matter of marriage. She shall not be forced into a life she hates. I will protest against it even to the altar."

"What is the matter with you? And as for 'insisting,' that is sheer folly."

"You will not find it so. I came here to-night on business. I am ready to make a bargain with you, for it is the only argument you understand. You have a very large sum of money belonging to me in your hand, or in your business. You have it 'on call.' If you refuse the requests I am going to make, then I refuse to allow you the use of this money any longer. I shall instruct Telford to collect it at once."

He looked at her with anger and anxiety. "What do you want?" he asked.

"I want Alice to have her free will in the Medway matter. If she wishes to marry him I will not oppose her; if she does not wish to marry him, I will not have her frightened, or

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

persuaded, or in any way talked into a loveless union; no, not for all the gold in America and all the nobility in Europe. And I must insist upon you authoritatively contradicting the statements made in to-day's papers."

"I cannot contradict them. I myself gave the reporters the main part of the information. Of course they added to it—"

"You must contradict it. You must say, at any rate, that the news is premature; that Miss Lloyd's education is yet unfinished, and that her marriage will not be considered for at least another year. This restoration of Alice to her place, as a girl not yet in society, is imperative. It must be done."

"Have I been mistaken in you all these years? What makes you talk to me in this strain? You are surely out of your mind. I shall send a physician to see you to-morrow."

"Will you agree to these two things—contradict the report of to-day, and leave Alice perfectly free to make her own decision about Lord Medway?"

"What if I do not agree?"

"Then you will find it more difficult to pay Lord Medway the money you have promised him than you imagine it to be now."

"Ah! That is your move. Very clever indeed! Alice is to have her way or else you

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

will make it impossible for me to have my way. Who put you up to this plan? Telford?"

"Will you do as I want you to do? Or will you give up my money?"

"I cannot possibly pay your money back at present. In some respects it would mean ruin to me. Why, it turns me gray to think of it!"

"In every respect it is ruin to any girl to marry without love. Alice may be spared a marriage she does not desire, you may be spared a repayment you dread by two small acts of simple justice. Will you do them?"

"I suppose I must. You ought to have gone into stocks, Marian; you drive a Shylock bargain—no consideration at all for a man's word, or bond, or feelings."

"Nicholas, whenever did you feel for any one's word, or bond, or feelings? Have you cared for my feelings? Or for poor Stephen's? Or for Alice's? I am no Shylock. If I could have appealed to your heart I never should have thought of your purse. Will you do to-morrow morning what I ask of you?"

"Yes—and what will you do?"

"I will pay the price of it."

"Very well. You have made your bargain. I suppose Medway can see Alice to-morrow?"

"Certainly. I wish her to judge fairly. Let

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

him ask for himself. Let her answer for herself."

With a calm "good-night" she then went away to the quiet little room which had for many years been her place of meditation and prayer, — the room from which she had brought so often the peace that passeth understanding and the rest that no earthly love can give. She was trembling all over, her heart beat rapidly, her face was set to her purpose, her eyes shining. But this "closet apart" was full of peace; the spiritual emanations of years clung to it. A great seriousness fell like a mantle all over her, and to be serious is to be at repose. It was not long before she could put the earth beneath her feet; then her soul, feeling its immortality, sat light upon its temporal perch, and knew a joy past utterance, a sense of divine presence, a serene amazement in which all trouble and questions and conclusions were lost. Her face had a radiance that was not colour, but a direct spiritual effluence; the shining of the soul through mere flesh and blood, for it is the soul that makes the body, and inward beauty seldom fails to express itself outwardly.

The opening and shutting of a door, and a bar or two of a hunting song in which Alice's voice mingled with John McAslin's, dissolved the

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

glory, and recalled her to temporal affairs. But, oh, the divine tranquillity in which her sorrow for Steve and her care for Alice were lost! Her own heart-longing and heart-aching, and all the heaviness of life's great tragedy had become lighter than a grasshopper; and though the spiritual tide ebbed quickly out, nothing could rob her of that calm repose it left behind.

In that prescient condition she saw clearly the end to which Alice and John McAslin were drifting, and the knowledge brought no fear with it. "He is a good man," she said softly, "and he loves her. I will neither meddle nor make, nor in any way try to influence her, for a hand wiser than mine is weaving their destiny."

Mrs. Lloyd held to this position even with regard to Lord Medway, though, at her daughter's urgent request, she accompanied her in the morning to the interview which Lord Medway desired, but she took little part in their conversation. The young noble had never before looked so handsome, and never before been so self-effacing. He regretted, with apparent sincerity, the publicity given to his aspirations, because they appeared so egotistical on his part, and because Alice had felt this publicity to be an offence. He declared his affection to be sincere and lasting, and asked

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

permission to renew his addresses, when a year in society should have better enabled her to know her own position and what was demanded of it.

Alice felt it to be impossible to say any of the disagreeable things she had intended to say. When a man puts himself, metaphorically, at a woman's feet, it is hard for her to wantonly insult him. She found no presumption to snub, and no claims were made on her future kindness which she thought it necessary to deny. And Medway really felt the disappointment in his pocket, and his pocket greatly influenced his life. His dreams of unlimited credit and unlimited expenditure were over, or at least postponed, and another year of financial straits and annoyances was before him. The thought of this condition impressed a despondency on his face and manner which Alice was led to believe she was entirely answerable for. It had its effect, for when he asked: "May I return to Lloyd Park next summer?" she was unable to give a decided refusal. So he went away with a hope that he trusted time and social influences would bring to perfection.

As soon as he was really gone Alice experienced a kind of regret. All that he could give her appeared for the moment so desirable. She

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

said to her mother. "I cannot feel certain about anything. What do you think, mother?"

"Well, Alice, there is one test of both men and matter—that of practice. The world always asks of everything, 'Will it work? If not, it must go.' Ask yourself, 'Do I love him well enough to live with him all our lives, to bear with all his faults, to forgive his neglect, to nurse him in sickness, to take an interest in all that interests him?' If not, a marriage with him will not work. It must go."

"Then I think it must go, mother."

"Be sure in your own mind, Alice."

"Why didn't father speak to me this morning?"

"There was no need to trouble you. I had a conversation with him last night, while you were singing with Mr. McAslin. He promised me to deny authoritatively the report of yesterday, and also to allow you the fullest and freest choice in the matter of your marriage."

"Oh!"

It was all she said; it was all she wished to say, at the time. That strange indecision which gives to whatever we are likely to lose a renewed worth and interest was troubling her heart. Between Lord Medway and her father's paid secretary there was a social gulf whose

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

width and depth she was able pretty accurately to measure, and for a moment she told herself it was impossible to cross it. Then she remembered that between Lord Medway and John McAslin, as men, there was a mental and moral gulf greater than the social one. John would lift her higher than all her hopes and aspirations. To walk on the same plane with Lord Medway, she must sink lower than herself every way. John's voice and presence set her soul vibrating like music. For Lord Medway she had, at most, an experimental interest, made up of flattered vanity and tolerant indifference. "It won't work," she said to herself. "He may go back to England and stay there." And yet she sighed, and wondered "why the nice lover was always the poor one."

After this crisis was fairly over, there was one of those pauses in life which generally follow periods of great feeling or great excitement. Jessie began to think her visit to Lloyd Park a little monotonous, and to wonder at the stupid life some rich people endured.

"The same things occur every day, and at the same hour," she said to John, "and though the place is pretty and the house beautiful, river views and fine furniture do not seem to be wholly satisfying things."

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

"But Miss Lloyd reads and plays and sings, and has friends. These are satisfying things, Jessie," answered John.

"Oh, John, you tire of books; they do all the talking; and you cannot be always playing and singing to yourself. And as to friends who all pay their visits on the same afternoon, and who dare not say one unconventional word, what pleasure is there in them?"

"But the coolness and verdure of the country, its —"

"John, I do not believe in the coolness of the country. And the dense green of the woods is depressing beyond everything. The river glares. The long, dusty lanes are awful. I prefer the city. No place in summer is so cheery and comfortable as New York. You are never disappointed in its supplies. Ice-creams and the best of fruits are at every corner. I find Central Park sylvan enough. The streets have always a shady side. There is a constant point of interest somewhere — a concert, a show, a lecture, or a labour meeting. Yes, I wish the Lloyds would come back to the city. I am tired to death of the country."

"I enjoy my visits there very much."

"Apparently Alice enjoys them also."

"What makes you say that, Jessie?"



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"She talks a great deal about you in an underhand way."

"I don't like the word 'underhand,' Jessie. What do you mean by it?"

"I mean that she gets me to talk about you. I say to myself constantly, 'If Miss Alice wants to pull out the stop called John, she shall play on it herself;' and then, before I know, I am telling her about your last speech, or describing some of your Western adventures, or explaining how good you are to father and mother, or in some other obvious way preaching for my saint. And she sits smiling and listening, and answering me, and encouraging me in monosyllables, and I call that 'underhand.' But it must give her pleasure or she would not always begin such a conversation. However, John, even with you to talk about, the time goes very slowly, and I am ready for a change. I wonder where Steve is. When did you hear from him?"

"Yesterday. He said he was going to the Baltic. He is a queer fellow."

"He is nice enough. A great many people are much less interesting than Steve Morrison."

Change, however, does not come because it is wished for, nor can it ever be safely forced. Indeed, it is a wise provision that for the majority duty stands guard over wayward inclina-

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

tions. Duty kept Jessie safely on its homely sward, and the weeks went not unhappily away. The most wearisome days were those she spent at Lloyd Park, and Alice finally found it impossible to detain her beyond her business hours. She felt the sweet alleys of the garden lonely, and the stillness and method of the fine house oppressed her. After its ceremony and quiet, it was a joy to step lightly to the New York pavements, to feel at liberty to be herself, to look as cross or as happy as she wanted, to walk as quickly as she felt like walking, to speak with all the plainness or emphasis she desired.

It was different with John. The sweet, lonely alleys of the garden, the shadows of the woods, even the long vistas of the dusty country lanes were full of all delights to him, for Alice was very often his companion in them. She frequently drove to the railway station for her father and John, and then in the moonlight evenings and the early mornings they found themselves together without any special planning for the meeting. There were always roses to be cut, or the bees to look at, or the grapes to gather, or a new chrysanthemum to classify. Oh, love had a thousand excuses! Love made all events to serve his own desires and purposes!

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

And the silence and ceremony of the Lloyd household pleased John. It seemed the proper atmosphere for Alice. She made glory in its dimness, and music in its silence. The flutter of her white garments, the rose-like loveliness of her face, the grace and harmony of her movements, all these things seemed to John but the outward manifestations of a pure and guileless soul. He wondered at Jessie's waning enthusiasm; Lloyd Park was to him the loveliest spot on earth; it was the home of Alice, and her presence, or the memory of it, invested the whole place with the glamour and glory of love.

Mr. Lloyd had not the slightest suspicion of this attachment; indeed, it was unconfessed by the lovers themselves. Both knew it, but John feared to speak, lest he had been too presumptuous. Alice feared to listen, lest words should destroy the indefinable, ineffable charm of their conscious silence. She did not wish to be brought to resolution and acknowledgment. In such case, she would have to decide a question she did not wish to consider. She was too happy to make inquiry about her happiness. She feared to do so. She had an instinctive apprehension that the delicate bloom on the wings of Psyche might easily be soiled and wasted by too much examination. And John had the same delicacy of feeling. He divined

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

that while love was shyly advancing and retreating, it was well to let well enough alone.

Mrs. Lloyd was not so ignorant as her husband of the condition of affairs between her daughter and John McAslin; for she was naturally an observing woman, though her sense of observation had been dulled by long neglect. She had so carefully trained herself not to see what pertained to this life that a sentiment so delicate and undemonstrative might have easily escaped her notice; yet in a fitful, passing manner she was aware of it, and the knowledge did not trouble her. "John is good, and clever, and likely to have a brilliant career, and Alice might do much worse than marry him," was generally the conclusion she came to, if she gave the matter consideration; a thing that circumstances as yet did not often compel her to do.

Besides, during these summer and fall months, she had been entertaining a new and absorbing interest. Her interview with her lawyer had been one of pregnant importance. To her amazement, she had found him not only willing, but anxious to aid her in the great work she was slowly planning. For the words spoken by John McAslin had sunk into her heart, and troubled its still depths into active, aching consciousness. The force and meaning

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

of these words remained with her; their actual order she could not remember.

"But, Mr. Telford," she said, "I was made to understand that my money is not mine; that I am only a steward for others; that I must not only render unto God the things which are God's, but also unto man the things that are man's; and that if I do not do this I shall have the fate of the unjust steward. And that 'outer darkness' and the 'binding hand and foot' terrifies me. What can it mean? Help me to escape from it at any labour and cost."

"I will be your friend and helper in this matter most gladly," he answered, "and I am thankful that you have realised your responsibility before it is too late. Your father made money and left it to you, and you have simply buried it in a napkin. Even its silent growth accuses you. It has been silent money too long. Now, madame, make it speak."

"What shall it say?" inquired Mrs. Lloyd, eagerly.

"First," replied Mr. Telford, "it might tell you to pull down those shameful old tenements in H—— Street, from which you derive so much yearly income. They are responsible for incredible suffering, and incredible wrong and crime. Send for architects and let them devise homes in which men and women and chil-

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

dren may be able to live like human beings. Remember, if they can't pray, they can wash; and cleanliness is a kind of godliness, and leads to higher things."

This suggestion, received with enthusiasm by Mrs. Lloyd, was strenuously opposed by her husband. "Our poor," he said, "are mostly Irish, and they like to crowd. If they wanted decent homes, capital would flow into building them, just as it flows into building saloons and beer gardens." When arguments failed he tried scorn and anger, and finally such arts of affection as might once have availed, but which were now only to be placed among the futile efforts on which are stamped those sad, ineffectual words—Too late!

She took no counsel of him, but with wise deliberation carried out the plan suggested. Her time was occupied with architects and philanthropists of various kinds, and she threw off as she might have thrown off a garment the mysticism and solitude which had been for years the air she had loved to breathe. "A more excellent way has been shown me," she said; and she renewed even her physical youth in its invigorating action and sympathies.

She talked much to John on the subject, and he was always ready to prevent the material side of her efforts claiming too much for them-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

selves. For there was a tendency in the work to which she had put her hand leading to the exaltation of mere human means, and John regarded this as a distinct lowering of that Brotherhood which he was always advocating.

"If we are to love humanity and labour for its welfare," he said, "then we must look at humanity from its noblest destiny and responsibilities. We must consider that man is not only a citizen of this world, but an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Comfortable houses, good food, perfect drainage and education, are but means to a loftier end. For man is not a mere animal to be cultured and cared for, so that he may get through life as pleasantly as possible, and then be done with it; he is the child of God, made for eternal life, and all our loving service for him must be based on our love for God."

"You mean that from the fatherhood of God must spring the brotherhood of man?" asked Mrs. Lloyd.

"Yes," answered John. "This is the great charter of our salvation, that first we love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind; then, without fail, we shall love our neighbour as ourselves. And if any man or woman, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, Mohammedan, reach this

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

height, that man or woman has attained unto salvation."

In this way, and through such conversation, she was prevented from falling into those extremes of feeling which usually attend conversions of any kind; for coming directly out of the cloud of mysticism into the vivid day of actuality and labour, it was very difficult for her not to overrate the importance of the work growing so visibly under her care and generosity.

Never before had a summer passed so swiftly and pleasantly to Mrs. Lloyd. She was astonished when Alice became restless and anxious to get back to the city; yet, as soon as the subject was taken up by her own mind, she was equally eager for it. She would be nearer to her work, — nearer to her lawyer and adviser, — nearer to the people whom she wished to benefit. So the early days of October saw the large house on the avenue opened again, and Mrs. Lloyd and her daughter, each through their own hopes and desires, looking forward to a winter that should answer all their expectations.

Jessie also was gratified. She was very unwilling to give up her pupil, but she was very weary of her pupil's surroundings, and quite elated over her first visit to the Lloyd city

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

house. It was an exceedingly handsome home, and satisfied her conception of a rich man's dwelling. Its stately splendour reflected a sort of honour on her; she even fancied it influenced Alice, that it made her more reticent and dignified, and less inclined to familiarity and confidences. But if there was any truth in this fancy, it arose from circumstances hardly realised even by Alice herself.

The girl had quickly found that John, in the city, was much more frequently present, and she feared the constant proximity. Some days Mr. Lloyd did not go to his office at all, and John brought the correspondence to him and answered the letters at the house. Then he usually dined with them, remaining with his employer an hour or two afterwards, occupied with business, or sometimes attending the ladies to an entertainment or passing the evening with them in their own drawing-room. And Alice had reached that stage of love when love is silent and shy, because it has come to understand that all of life's joy is in the power of another. Undoubtedly Alice loved John with the sweet fervour that marks a first affection, and yet she was not free from reservations and little social anxieties. And she knew well how angry her father would be at the destruction of all his hopes regarding Lord Medway,

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

while she was equally certain that he would visit his anger on John.

Also, she was not oblivious of what her friends and acquaintances would say; and it was easier to contemplate their opinions in the country than in their very presence, surrounded by all the circumstances which gave authority to social judgments. There were also hours in which she suffered from the uncertainties of love—when she wondered if her love would bear John's steady and increasing devotion to ideas which she did not altogether approve—hours when Jessie's intimacies fretted her sense of what was perfectly high-bred and lady-like; and when the thought of John's family, and its possible intrusions, was not endurable. So she was often depressed, as those must be in whom perfect love has not cast out fear.

These feelings certainly found no expression in words, but they made an atmosphere which Jessie felt and resented so far as to retire promptly into her position as teacher, — a position Alice appeared to be quite ready to accept. But this appearance was in reality the indifference which Alice felt to all other subjects but the great one which was to decide her future life. Her feelings toward Jessie had not changed; it was the constant growth

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

of feeling regarding John which compelled her to assume that veil of dignified calm, behind which she hid all emotion, but which Jessie thought the result of pride, of self-appreciation. Others had the same opinion, for "what airs Alice Lloyd puts on since that affair with Lord Medway," was a very usual comment of visitors at the Lloyd dwelling.

One November day, just as the lamps were being lit on the avenue, Jessie came down the steps of this dwelling with an angry heart. "I will give no more lessons in that house," she said to herself. "Alice has become 'Miss Lloyd' with emphasis. She is decidedly changed. She has put on city airs. She thinks I shall expect to be invited to her entertainments, and that it is necessary to snub me in advance. Pooh! I want nothing she has, or can give me;" then she laughed a little to herself, and added, "Yes, I want her money for my labour; and I won't throw that away for a little false pride. Oh, dear, I wish! I wish! — I wish I did not have to teach!"

But the smile of her mother as she entered the house, the cheerful supper-table, the glowing fire in the little grate, put all dissatisfaction quickly out of her mind. As she took off her wraps and brushed back her hair, she heard her father and John coming up the stairs to-

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

gether. "After all," she told herself, "I have John! Alice wants him, but she can't make up her mind to accept him with his etceteras of unfashionable opinions and unfashionable relations. And I wouldn't change places with her if I had to change my opinions and my relations. John is worth twenty of her! Who are the Lloyds, anyway?"

She put down her brush with considerable accent, and went into the dining-room humming a melody that had sprung from her heart as an unconscious explanation of her mood. As soon as she entered the room, it stopped suddenly. Steve stood in the middle of the floor watching for her, and the next moment he was holding her hands, while a thousand joys and hopes lit up his beaming face. They met in each other's arms, the meeting being perfectly unconsidered and natural. Before either of them were aware of the act Steve had kissed her. He had called her "dear Jessie." He had led her with the air of one who had the right of possession to the chair beside his own. And then he slipped into her hands a little box full of ornaments made of amber from the Baltic Sea, amber that looked like crystallised sunshine, and a coral comb for her hair that he had bought in Naples, and a set of rich laces from the Isle of Malta.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Jessie was delighted. What woman is insensible to presents, especially such presents as are for the adornment of her beauty? She could not eat her supper. She ran into her room and came out brilliant with amber glory and silky, white lace. Then Steve could not eat for very admiration of her; and their joy spread as fire spreads, and every heart was aflame with love and friendship, and the delight of welcome for one who had been far away and had come back to his home again. Nothing explicit had been said, and yet every member of the family felt that Jessie and Steve belonged to each other; and as Flora was visiting her betrothed's sister, and John had business with Mr. Lloyd, and Mr. and Mrs. McAslin remained together in the dining-room, there seemed to be a propitious arrangement by which Steve and Jessie had the parlour to themselves. Steve went there with his purpose plainly written on his face. Jessie hid her intelligence of the position under a pretty access of vanity in her new and precious belongings. But all pretences fell away when they stood alone. Steve made no attempt to delay his fate. He said simply, yet with great tenderness:—

"Jessie, you know how truly I love you! What have you to say to me?" And the words

WHAT AILS THIS HEART OF MINE

Jessie said went like wine to Steve's head and heart, and he took her in his arms and answered with truest, fondest kisses:—

"Oh, you dear, dear girl! God bless you, Jessie! I will try from this instant to be worthy of you!"

511

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CHAPTER VII

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

THE man who cuts himself loose from the organised prejudices of his time and contemporaries is always regarded as a fool; and Steve could not escape this verdict, even from those who loved him. It did not give him serious trouble. He knew that the world in general looked on many things as "foolishness" which the Eternal that makes for righteousness holds to be the highest wisdom; and his simple, wandering life had been only in accord with that stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being.

For freedom he had joyfully given up home, and kindred, and great wealth. To escape the trammels of conventional life, he had been content to work with his hands for such things as were necessary for his existence. The religious doubts which assail thoughtful youths he had conquered, not in a martial, disputatious attitude, but on his knees in desert places, among woods and mountains, when he was alone with God. Solitudes and wide horizons

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

had given to his mind an equal plenitude. "If it be possible to believe too much in God," he once said to John, "I desire to be guilty of that sin." His faith in man was equally wide. His opinions were large, hopeful, and honest. They did not lurk in insinuations, nor were they ambushed in plausibilities; he put them boldly forward and asked no quarter for them.

Such a man was not likely to let love dominate him unchallenged. He was sure in the long run to inquire of its tendencies—how it would influence, and where it would lead him. So it was, that in the loneliness and storm of the Baltic shores, and in the heavenly beauty of the Mediterranean, he had fought out, during the past summer, the greatest battle a man can fight, as regards this life,—the battle between the absolute freedom that was his soul's highest atmosphere, and the captivating love that was his heart's sweetest hope. Freedom had nearly won him many times; perhaps if he had remained in the stress and storm of the bleak, tossing Baltic for a little longer, freedom would have gained the final victory; but under the soft Italian skies, and in the warm sunshine of the South, love had the atmosphere of its being. Memories of Jessie floated in the perfumed winds; and in its lovely languors he

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

dreamed only of her beauty and brightness, and thus love easily won the day.

A change, therefore, in his whole life had to be contemplated. He had asked Jessie to be his wife, and she had consented to his request; and he was well aware that marriage meant a home, and all its attendant cares and responsibilities. He would have to shut himself once more within four walls. He would be compelled to perform some regular work. He would be obliged to live day after day in the same place. No more wanderings over the length and breadth of the land; no more sleeping and dreaming under the stars, with his knapsack for a pillow. He had taken one dear, lovely woman to his heart; and he must take with her all the cares as well as all the joys woman inevitably brings.

Steve was so much in love that the prospect did not frighten him. Jessie was not accustomed to a large income; and he thought it would be easy to obtain work which did not chain him to a desk. Anything but that! He thought, too, as he was going to marry and settle down, his father would have some faith in his social reformation. And as he had loved Jessie's mother, surely he would feel some interest in the daughter of the woman he had once intended to make his wife. Of course

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

there must be an interview, and Steve did fear that. Nicholas Lloyd always brought to the front the worst side of his son, and Steve recognised this result, and was angry at it.

For a little while, however, he made no movement in regard to the future. He said to Jessie, "In three weeks I will speak to your father, and I hope satisfy all his reasonable desires for your comfort, and in the interval let us be happy, darling." And for once the clever, careful little woman was willing to be happy, — to take the sweetness of the present moment, — to put cares out of reckoning, and all considerations as to marriage and money matters beyond her horizon. She was during these three weeks delightful. She gave Steve a great love. She allowed her best nature full freedom. She forgot to consider herself. She grew more beautiful every day. Her voice was softer, her manner more gentle. She completely captivated Steve; he thought himself to be the happiest man in New York, and was ready to assert with all his heart that "the world was well lost for love."

Also, during these three weeks, Flora was married and went to her own house — a pretty little flat in Twelfth Street. The furnishing and adorning of its six small rooms was very much in Jessie's hands; and Steve went with

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

her and helped her, and supplied many pretty accessories. And what happy thoughts of his own home he had while doing so might be seen in his eyes, in his radiant face and boyish manner. Not unfrequently these heart-dreams found expression in pretty personal ambitions; thus, one afternoon as they were unpacking a present of china from the bridegroom's employer, Jessie said, —

"What lovely cups and saucers, Steve!"

"We can have a set like them."

"Oh, how delightful that will be! Do you know that this china is very fine, and consequently very expensive?"

"I think we can afford it."

"I don't like the parlour curtains, do you, Steve?"

"No indeed! I hope we shall show more taste."

Thus, in the happiness of others they laid the foundation of their own, and time went swiftly by, as it has a way of doing when the heart is light and the days are full of joy. After Flora's marriage, Steve began to think seriously of preparing for his own, and, as a first step towards it, he resolved to see his mother and sister. As he walked up the avenue, he reproached himself with being so laggard a son and a brother, and yet his re-

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

luctance to go home was a natural feeling. He feared his mother's calm, sad face, he feared that Alice would censure him; for it was not unlikely she had heard through Jessie that he had been in New York some weeks. He hated to make excuses, for he knew he would be sure to blurt out the truth, which was that Jessie had occupied all his thoughts and all his time.

It was a cold, snowy morning, and as he made his way through the fast-falling flakes, he asked himself seriously if this new love had slain, or even wounded, the old loves. No, and again, no! In his heart he knew that mother and sister were just as dear as ever. But then he was sure of their love. It had been tested a thousand times and found faithful. There was no wooing of it necessary. It was the treasure put safely away. Jessie's love was the treasure still in speculation. It had to be watched and cared for, and worked for until the happy hour of its appropriation arrived.

"That is the whole matter," he said positively, as he ran up the whitened steps and shook himself free of the gathered snow. How sweet and warm it was in the house! Too sweet and warm for Steve, who liked far better the snap of the frosty air and the brisk stimulant of the northwest wind. But the sweetness and warmth seemed just suitable for the lovely

10

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12

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

girl who turned with a cry of joy to welcome him:—

"Oh, Steve! Steve! Is it you at last? When did you come to New York?"

"I have been here more than a week or two. I have been busy wooing a wife. Did she not tell you?"

"Who? Do you mean Jessie McAslin?"

"Yes."

"Of course you have won her. She used to talk about you without rhyme or reason."

"Does she not talk about me now?"

"I have not encouraged her to talk about you for a long time. I have begun to doubt whether she is really the best kind of wife for you."

"She is the only wife for me, Alice. And she has promised to marry me very soon."

"Steve, do not marry just yet. Wait a little."

"I thought you wanted me to marry and settle."

"I do—but— Oh, Steve, it is such an important thing! You will also have to tell her who you are. I don't like that—but you cannot marry her under the name of Morrison."

"Certainly I cannot."

"And how will you support her? Jessie is an ambitious woman. She loves pretty things

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

of all kinds. I suppose all women do that. Are you going to accept the offer father made you, and go back to Wall Street?"

"Not in this life, and I have a good hope that my next life will not retrograde."

"Then, pray how are you going to live? Do you think Jessie will tramp east and west with you, or even endure your long absences?"

"I shall not ask her to do either. I shall get some employment which will let me have a little freedom, and keep a home in comfort."

"But you cannot give your cake away and then eat it. You give up your freedom for a wife. It is your own exchange. Then do not grumble at its limitations."

"How does father feel towards me?"

"I do not think he has changed his position in the least. You have not changed yours, why should he? Try now and accept the offer he leaves open to you from year to year."

"I cannot do so, Alice. I will not do a business that is founded on the principle of taking without giving, and claiming without earning. I will have nothing whatever to do with stocks, and shares, and usury. I will not live on interest, and dividends, and appropriated balances."

"Very good people have to do with them, and also live on them."

100



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"I have nothing to do with these very good people. I keep only my own conscience."

"How do you know your conscience is right?"

"Conscience is a 'crowned truth,' armed from birth at every point."

"I do not think so. It has to be educated in a great many people. Else what good is there in our reformatories?"

"I don't know. Do you?"

"I know you are as impossible as ever. Suppose you go and see mother. She is so much changed."

"Do you mean that she is ill?"

"Go and see for yourself. I will wait here until you return. You had better speak to her about your marriage."

Steve nodded assent and went slowly upstairs to his mother's room. She had always seemed to live so near to heaven that Steve could anticipate no other change but that which would remove her to the land of her hopes and prayers. And dearly as he loved her, he knew that he had given her many, many hours of anxiety and sorrow. So he went with heavy heart and lingering steps to her presence. Her door was ajar, and he pushed it gently open. Mrs. Lloyd sat at a table facing him, surrounded by papers and busily writing. She had the air of a happy woman.

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

She was handsomely dressed and looked much younger than her age warranted, for the cultivated, heavenly calm in which she had passed so many of the most vivid years of life had preserved her youth and beauty.

As Steve entered, she looked up quickly, and in that simple movement Steve recognised the great change that had taken place. Her face was alive with interest, her cheeks slightly flushed, her whole presence that of alert satisfaction. And as soon as she saw Steve another wondrous change appeared; a sudden transformation from the life of the intellect to the life of the heart. The intense love she had for her son was no longer pressed down and backward. It sprang into her eyes and illumined her countenance, it forced her to rise to her feet and outspread her arms, and Steve felt, even at the threshold, the warmth of her irrepressible attitude and cry —

"Steve! Steve! I was thinking of you a few moments ago. I was wishing you were here! And you come and answer my wish? Oh, you dear boy!"

The last words were said upon his lips, when Steve had folded her to his heart, and was laughing and crying in the same moment, and telling her she was the handsomest mother a man ever had, and the dearest and the sweet-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

est, asking between whiles, "What have you been doing to yourself, mother? Whatever have you been doing?"

"I have been doing something I want you to help me in, my own boy! Sit down here at my side and let me tell you all about it."

She began with Max Lehman's visit and told him all, even something of that marvellous experience through the night of her conviction, when she abandoned the selfishness of caring only for her own salvation, and determined to give herself to others, and then trust God for herself. She showed him the plans and the estimates for the first duty she had assumed, and as she talked grew luminous and eloquent over her hopes and intentions. In fact, she quite enthused Steve. His heart beat to her heart; his face caught the light on her face; his tongue echoed all she said; they were clasping hands over her sacred bond and duty, and were not aware of it.

"Now, you must see what I want of you, Steve. Mr. Telford cannot give his whole time, even though he gives his whole heart, to this work. I want you to act for me in business that I cannot well attend to, and in places I do not care to visit. There are materials to contract for, and these ought to be examined, — for we want the very best, — there are journeys

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

to take, and people to see, and papers to authenticate, and papers to sign, and workmen to look after, and a score of other things to attend to that a woman has neither the prestige nor authority to profitably take in hand. You say you like work if it keeps you in the open air and permits you to walk about. This is your opportunity, Steve. Will you be my agent in this good work? Will you see to it that not a dollar of the money I give for the benefit of my poor brothers and sisters is diverted from its right purpose?"

"Mother, I'll fight for every cent. I will see that the builders keep every tittle of their obligations. I will take care that the masons do not put more sand than lime in their mortar. The contractors shall do their full duty, the workmen shall do theirs. Send me whenever and wherever you wish on this work. I am with you, heart and soul."

"You make me exceedingly happy, Steve. When can you begin? To-day?"

"This very hour if you wish me."

"What are you doing now?"

He hesitated a moment, and then answered: "I have been wooing a wife the last few weeks. All summer I was at sea."

"A wife!" A sudden coldness, a chill that could be felt was in her voice. In fact, both

201

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Steve's mother and sister experienced a quick aversion to the thought of him marrying. They had urged him to entertain the idea, they had decided that marriage would be a good thing for him, but when the idea became fact, their first strong impulse was to repel it. It was a natural impulse, and Steve understood the feeling of which it was the outcome. He had been their idol, none the less so because he had caused them endless anxieties and required frequent help. To give him up to some strange woman! To become second where they had been first! No mother and sister ever loved thus fondly, and then relinquished without a sigh and a heartache.

Mrs. Lloyd, however, was not only conscientious, she was generous, and in a few minutes she recovered herself so completely that she was able to ask, with a smile, —

"Who is the young lady, Steve?"

"It is Jessie."

"Jessie McAslin?"

"Yes, to be sure. I forgot there might be some other Jessie. She is the only Jessie to me. I hope you like her, mother."

"She has many good qualities, Steve. Her brother is an exceptionally fine young man."

"John is perfect. So is Jessie." He looked so brave and so happy as he said the words that

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

it was impossible for Mrs. Lloyd to restrain sympathy with him. She let her little jealousies slip away from her consciousness. She leaned forward, kissed him, and said with tender enthusiasm, —

"I am so glad you are going to marry, Steve."

Tears of rapture came into Steve's bright eyes; he thought himself the happiest man in the world. Such a noble mother! and Jessie also! There was not a king nor kaiser he would have changed places with. He could not speak for very joy, but he lifted his mother's hand and kissed it.

"You see," she continued, "it will be so nice for you to have a pretty home of your own. Jessie will like that, — every good woman does, — and as I shall give you a fair salary, is there anything to prevent your marriage taking place very soon? If you look at to-day's newspaper you will see that I have advertised for an agent. I intended to give him two thousand dollars a year. Will that sum satisfy you, Steve? I hope so, for your salary will come out of the money that is no longer mine, — out of the money that I must use as a steward. Mr. Telford thought two thousand dollars a year a good salary for the work."

"It is more than good. I will be content with much less."

111

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Right, for every one, is right. You will have a wife to support."

"Jessie is very careful and prudent. She has been used, not only to making money, but to saving it. You would wonder if you knew how economical she is."

"We shall see, we shall see, Steve. The next thing is your home. You must take that from me. I want you to have a pretty home. A great deal of happiness depends upon it. Steve, my boy, I do hope you are going to be happy at last!"

As she spoke she opened her desk, took out her bank-book, and wrote a check for a thousand dollars. "A mother does not marry her only son every day," she said, with a pleasant laugh. "I may never have this good opportunity again, Steve, so you must let me humour my whim now. Here is a one thousand dollar check. It will furnish such a house as you need to begin life with." Then she walked to her toilet table and lifted a handsome ring. "Give that to Jessie, with my love, and go at once, Steve, for I want you to begin work this afternoon."

"Darling mother! How can I thank you?"

"Your happy face thanks me. Your loving heart thanks me. Now I will give you my orders for this afternoon, and then you will not

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

have to come back here to-day. We must have an office, Steve; a pleasant room in some building where you can put a safe for cash and papers; a place to which all this mail can be sent, where people on business can call and see you, where contracts can be made and signed, and so on. Hitherto I have used Mr. Telford's office, but it is no longer proper or convenient; so this afternoon rent a room, and buy a safe and such office furniture as is necessary, — no extravagance, mind, — and then to-morrow at ten o'clock report to me."

"Cannot I answer that pile of letters for you before I go, mother?"

"Not this morning. You are longing to tell Jessie what a good thing has come to you. Go, and be happy with her for an hour or two. To-day I will do this part of your work. And now I must begin at once, so good-bye. I shall see you every day now, Steve. What a pleasure that will be! One moment — have you seen your father?"

"Not yet. Do you wish me to see him?"

"Yes. I think I would say a kind and cheerful word to him. He loves you as well as he can love any one, Steve; and he has not been quite himself lately. Changes that even I can notice have taken place lately. He ought to give himself a holiday, — a long holi-



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

day, — and he will not. He ought to see a good physician, and he will not."

"What changes have you noticed?"

"A month ago he was so eccentric, and did things that puzzled all of us. Twice this summer he has had extraordinary fits of extravagance. His egotism and boasting about Lord Medway's attentions to Alice are very unlike your father, or else I have never known the man. He has also assumed a slowness of speech, which I suppose he thinks adds to his dignity; but it does not. However, Alice says he is much better the last three weeks, so do not say anything to irritate him."

"I will not. Shall I tell him of my intended marriage?"

"I would. For some reason he seems to have taken a great liking to the McAslins."

"What of my engagement in your affairs?"

"Do not speak of that. We must wait a little; a favourable opportunity will come."

Steve had walked very slowly and heavily upstairs to the interview with his mother. It was over, and he came down them as if he were treading on air. Such good fortune seemed almost incredible. Nothing that he could have planned for himself would have been half so consonant with the peculiar necessities of his nature and ideas. And he could not help re-

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

flecting, how all summer, while he was apparently drifting, his mother had been unconsciously working for him while she had thought herself altogether working for others. But not until that very morning — scarce half an hour before his visit — had it struck her that the needed overseer and agent might well be her own son. Thus it is always in life ordered by God. We build, and we build far better than we know or intend, for the Master's hand is invisibly directing and controlling events to far nobler ends than our own wisdom or foresight had intended.

Swift as light these thoughts passed through Steve's mind; they induced a momentary fervour, and he did not perceive the opening of the parlour door until his father came slowly out into the hall. They met at the foot of the stairs, and Steve said in the cheerful voice of one who has a heart at ease, —

"Good-morning, father."

"You! Where have you come from?"

"From the Baltic and the Mediterranean."

"From Jupiter and dreamland! Tut, sir! And pray where are you going to now?"

"I am going to stay in New York."

"Tired of roaming at last?"

"Yes. I am going to be married."

"Tip-top folly! How are you going to sup-

22



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

port a wife? Whoever the girl may be I am sorry for her. You must know that she marries you because you are my son. She thinks you will have plenty of money."

"She does not know I am your son. She is marrying me because she loves me."

"I hope you are going to make her a decent living."

"I hope so."

"Very well, then, go down to the office with me this morning. I have to hire a stranger to do the work you ought to be glad to do for me. What are you hesitating about?"

"The old trouble, father. You know all about it. Why should we open that question again? There are so many things we can talk pleasantly about."

"There is only one question between you and me. We must settle that question first. Come, Steve, I have never let any one sit at your old desk. I always thought you would come back to it."

"I can never go back to my old desk, father. I wish you would put it out of your sight and your memory. Besides, I have at present some other work, which will take up the whole of my time for I know not how long. Father, forgive me that I cannot be what you would like me to be."

"Then whatever did you come here for?"

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

And a torrent of passionate words fell from his trembling lips, after this question, — words that shocked and shamed, and that fell like stones on Steve's heart. He was confounded by the anger he had raised, and as he opened his mouth to try to soothe the wrathful man, Alice appeared. She stood between her father and Steve, though it was with some displeasure she asked her brother "why he came home, if he had nothing but disagreeable news to tell, and nothing to do but put his sick father in a passion."

So quickly does trouble tread on the heels of joy! So quickly does disappointment shadow the glory of hope! Steve had to suffer both, for when he reached home, he found that Jessie had unexpectedly received a visit from an old friend whose home was in Princeton, and had gone back with her for a couple of days. There was a loving little note for Steve, but the written words did not atone for the delicious expectations that had lost their first grace in anger and delay. However, Steve accepted the circumstances which he could not alter as cheerfully as possible, for many experiences had taught him how often

All earthly pleasures vanish thus:
So little hold of them have we,
That we from them, or they from us,
May in a moment ravished be.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

It was well that he had his mother's commissions to attend to. They occupied him all the afternoon, and in the evening he looked forward to John's society. He intended then to reveal his real name and position, and prove that he had deserved the confidence and friendship that had been so freely given him. But John did not return to dinner, and Steve, remembering his father's anger, concluded that the business and correspondence of the day had been delayed by it. If it had not been for the ring and the check in his pocket, he might have doubted the hopes of the morning, so quickly and absolutely had they been dashed by disappointments. He even fancied that Mr. and Mrs. McAslin were less friendly than usual; so much so, that he had not the heart to tell them anything, and was glad to recollect a trades' meeting in whose affairs John had expressed an interest. It was not unlikely he had gone there directly from Mr. Lloyd's, and pretty certain that he would visit the men some time during the evening.

In some respects these suppositions were correct. John had been detained. Mr. Lloyd had found it impossible to attend to business with his usual devotion. In spite of himself, his interview with Steve troubled him. He could not forget his son's happy face and cor-

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

dial gladness of manner, nor yet his own brutal interruption of their discussion. A vague feeling that he was "not master of himself" at the time made him tremble with apprehension. He clung to John and talked to him of many things apart from their ordinary affairs; and when John finally rose to leave, Mr. Lloyd said "he would walk down the avenue with him."

A newsboy passed them immediately, calling "Extra! The Great Strike! Extra!" and Mr. Lloyd stopped and bought a paper. "What folly!" he said. "The mice might as well rise against the cats as labour against capital. These men are only consuming their savings and the funds of their union."

"It will be a long strike," said John, thoughtfully.

"All the worse for the strikers then," answered Mr. Lloyd. "Their strength lies in the beginning of a fight and is exhausted as it proceeds. The employer dreads most the breaking up of contracts and the suspension of work; but as soon as the first shock is over, he makes new arrangements, and the strike's continuance does not trouble him. He has suffered the worst and can bide his time. You know what biding their time means to the strikers?"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"It means hunger, and sickness, and trouble of every kind," said John.

"And when you have talked till you are tired, the last meaning of it all is—that to attack capital is to diminish wages; right or wrong, that is the end of it."

"I don't think so," was John's reply to Mr. Lloyd. "It is an old theory that wages are paid out of capital, and that to increase wages you must increase capital. I don't think in any dispute between masters and men, the question as to whether the capital sunk is sufficient to increase wages is ever raised,—the dispute is whether prices will allow of the increase. The men then look to production, not to capital, as the fund out of which wages are to be paid. That, however, is not the question now. I do not see what this strike will accomplish. There is no necessity for it. Work is plentiful and wages are not bad. They will have no public sympathy. It is the wrong time," said John, with an air of worry.

"That is just it. When other people have a good market before them, they set themselves to make the best of it. Working-men, driven by their unions, choose that lucky period for strikes and idleness. But they can't coerce customers as they do employers; and by all that's fair and just, there is a point when even

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

employers will abandon work that does not pay them."

"Is it not right that working-men should do what they think best for themselves?"

"A conspiracy against free labour is not good for any one, John McAslin. Why do you stand still?"

"To say 'good-night,' sir. I turn eastward here."

"Are you going home?"

"No; I am going to a Socialist meeting."

"I should like to go with you."

"You may hear some unpleasant truths, sir."

"Still, I would like to go—if you have no objections."

John said he had none, and the two men walked across the city together. "I want to know what your Socialism means, John," said Mr. Lloyd. "Of course, I know that it looks to an entire change of society."

"If Socialism meant only a change of society without a change of its heart, it would mean no change at all, except on the surface. Socialism means a changed conception of human life, a higher conception of human dignity."

"Is humanity not dignified enough?"

"No. We want a dignity that will scorn to claim what it has not earned, a dignity that will not feel itself degraded by any kind of

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

honest labour. Socialism means the simplifying of life as much as possible. It means the defence of all weak members of the great human family; it means courage to live by our personal convictions; it means charity for the failings of others; in short, it means the application of the Christianity of the first century to the daily life of the nineteenth century."

As well as the noise and confusion of the streets would permit, this argument was continued until they reached their destination. A group of men stood before it, smoking; John said a few words to them in an undertone, and then assisted Mr. Lloyd up the narrow, dimly lighted stairway. He was quite excited by his adventure, and he said to himself — and meant it — "this is far better than sitting alone planning and worrying."

The room, a fairly large one, was well filled, even to the door. Nothing could be less inviting than its general appearance. The seats were of unpainted wood, and the solitary iron gas-burners protruded at intervals from the bare, plastered walls, and yet the humanity filling it gave to these meagre appointments a visible and unquestionable dignity and interest. John appeared to be well known and well liked. Men made way cheerfully for him, and a youth rose and gave Mr. Lloyd his seat. It

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

was a voluntary mark of respect for age; nothing was known of his wealth or influence.

Then John was aware of some strong feeling agitating the whole assembly, — a feeling of anger and dissent, — and lifting his eyes to the platform, he saw Steve standing aggressively in front of the audience, his hands in his pockets, his head thrown forward a little, his lips tight set, his eyes flashing with that electric spark that distinguishes the modern eye.

"You have nothing to fear, sir," said John to his companion, for he saw Mr. Lloyd's face pale, and a visible tremor pass down his large body. "I know that speaker. It is his delight to see how far he can stir these men up. He has been defying them now about something or other. I know he has. Look at him!"

It was easy to look at the handsome, disdainful youth, for he seemed to stand alone, and to thoroughly enjoy the storm he had raised. It was the more remarkable because of its silence. Hisses and groans would have been less dismaying to most men than the still wrath of that voiceless crowd. Evidently he was waiting for the words which no one had the courage or the ability to give him.

"Nothing to say!" he ejaculated. "Of course you have nothing to say. Then I will tell you once more that it is all muddish non-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

sense, our clamouring about our 'rights.' We don't know how to use the 'rights' we have. Talk about shorter hours! Hadn't we better give up working altogether? Most of us have already found out how little work we can do in our present hours. Who ever sees a good day's work done in these times? We should be far more ashamed of it than of doing real bad work. I'll tell you what! We are a lot of dishonourable idlers, who take money for work we do not do."

"It's a lie! A lie as big as the United States!" shouted a man from the audience.

"It's the solid truth," retorted Steve. "Denying truth does n't make truth a lie. I know it's the truth, for I'm in with you. There is not a bigger idler anywhere than I am. But I like justice, it is a sixth sense with me; I like justice for every man, I don't care whether he is rich or poor. And I say that just as long as we take money for work we do not do, we can hold our tongues about rich men living on interest and dividends. We are birds of the same feather. Sweep the cobwebs out of your brains, and give rich and poor alike fair play."

"Do you mean to say, Steve Morrison, that a poor, badly paid working-man, taking his work as easy as he can, is as big a thief as —

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

well, say, old Nicholas Lloyd, gormandising and drinking and sleeping, while a lot of poor souls are sweating and worrying to make his interests and dividends?"

"Six of one and half a dozen of the other," answered Steve, with a complaisant smile. "I happen to have done something for the rich man you name. He isn't a worse sort than the crowd of us in this room. He does not gormandise; his servants eat far richer food than others, and twenty times more of it. Suppose he does drink, — are all of us strictly temperate? As for poor men 'sweating and worrying' about their work, I don't know any that do it; but I do happen to know that Nicholas Lloyd can't sleep of nights for worrying about his investments. Do any of us want to join the dividend dance of the present day? I should say not! Do we want to welter down to idiocy? Do we want the shadow of paresis following us to a premature grave? You imagine these kings of the stock market build palaces. No, they build private asylums. We may as well let the rich man and his troubles alone; he has plenty of them."

"He has that," said Mr. Lloyd, thumping his stick on the floor and drawing on himself the curious gaze of many eyes.

"He does not know what freedom is," con-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

tinued Steve. "He is the prisoner of society; he is the prisoner of his very servants. He can't whistle or sing on the street or shout across it to a friend; it would not be respectable. He can't put a bundle on a stick and take a long tramp with nature. We can. The rich man has to wear particular clothes at particular times, and in particular ways. Which of us would do that? Their trusteeships and their bonds and scrip, and their lawyer's visits and their dyspepsia, and gout, and biliousness, and nervous prostration, ought to make us fear the sight of gold, but it does n't. We are as mad after it as they are. We are a lot of frauds altogether—one as bad as the other—and Socialism won't save us; no, not by the whole circumference of the world."

He poured out these words with such passion and fluency that no one interrupted, though many rose to their feet to do so. As soon as he stopped there was an angry clamour, a shout, the forward movement of disputing men, the muttering wrath of those that remained behind. Mr. Lloyd was greatly excited; he rose to his feet, he called out loudly, "Steve! Steve! John McAslin, let me go to Steve! I want to tell these born idiots the truth for once."

"Sit down, sir! Sit down, sir! We are going to have trouble, I fear." The next

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

moment he called to a man in front of him, "Franz Fontaine, sing these noisy men quiet, or there will be more than the music to pay."

Then a bright little Frenchman stood up on his chair, and in tones of sonorous melody began the "Marseillaise." Some one else instantly started the "Star Spangled Banner," and Steve cried out in a voice full of mockery and command, "Stop that music! We will not have the 'Marseillaise' flirting with our national hymn. John McAslin, you know what we want, and if you can't start it I will," and with his bright face aglow, and smiling and stepping to its majestic swing and music, Steve rolled out the battle hymn of Christian Socialism:—

The day of the Lord is at hand, at hand:
Its storms roll up the sky;
The nations sleep starving on heaps of gold,
The dreamers all toss and sigh.
The night is darkest before the morn,
When the pain is sorest the child is born:
And the day of the Lord is at hand!

Gather you, gather you, angels of God.
Freedom, mercy, and truth!
Come, for the earth is grown coward and old,
Come down and renew us her youth.
Wisdom, self-sacrifice, daring, and love!
Haste to the battle-field, stoop from above,
To the day of the Lord at hand!



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Steve came down to his friend singing the last line. He was having what he considered a glorious time, and he looked radiantly triumphant as the fervent, confident words fell sharply to his footsteps. Mr. Lloyd rose as he advanced. He was full of excitement, and hesitated, as he regarded Steve, between anger and approbation. Steve broke the last word of his song in two when he saw his father, but he made no effort to escape the impending interview.

"Steve, you did pretty well," said the old gentleman. "I have a great mind to forgive you. Go to the platform again, Steve, and I will go with you. I can tell these people their faults as well as you can, and it is only fair some rich man had an opportunity with them."

"No, sir," answered John, quickly. "It would not do at all. Besides, the members are dispersing. I am sure also that you are very much tired."

"I never enjoyed a night so much in my life. It has been the best kind of entertainment. John McAslin, this is my son, Stephen Lloyd."

"We know each other well already, sir," answered Steve. "John and I are brothers. I am engaged to marry John's sister, Jessie."

"Then you are a very lucky fellow."

STEVE'S OPPORTUNITY

But John said nothing. A sudden reserve attacked him; he left Mr. Lloyd in the care of his son and went thoughtfully home. Steve's reticence regarding his family did not please him. Under the circumstances he thought he ought to have been more confidential. He would much rather have had no acquaintance-ship between Alice and Steve. He feared this relationship would be an injury to his own hopes. For love quickens the apprehension, and he had long perceived that Alice had lost much of her liking for his sister Jessie. He therefore understood, without reasoning on the matter, that she would be very apt to think her brother's marriage to Jessie was "enough of the McAslins." And this feminine probability so exercised his heart, that the perilous fascination of "knowing the worst of it" took possession of his intellect, and he resolved, on the first opportunity, to put to Alice the question on which his whole future happiness depended.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"I MUST SEE JESSIE."

It was Jessie and Steve's wedding-day, and they sat together in the McAslin flat, talking over their last preparations. Their own beautiful home was ready for occupancy, and after the ceremony they were going to it. Steve had ordered the flowers for its decoration; the table was laid for their wedding dinner; a capable servant was at that moment cooking it. There was a rapture of love on Steve's handsome face as he drew his bride toward him, and an adorable shyness and answering tenderness on Jessie's.

"We shall meet no more until we meet in God's house," said Steve. "I shall take you, darling, as from his very hand." And then he drew her closer to his heart, and kissed her fair face with a fervid and solemn affection.

Affairs had gone very well with Steve after those memorable interviews with his mother and father. He took to the work provided for him, and gave it a supersensitive attention.

I MUST SEE JESSIE

Nor did he dislike it. There was a variety of interest and a constant movement, which afforded scope for his restless disposition. To be sure, the recurrence of certain duties at certain hours made him often impatient, but as yet he had never given way to that impulse which longed to defy whatever in life was positive and periodical.

There was also a better feeling between Mr. Lloyd and his errant son. The older man could not forget the bold recklessness of Steve's philippic at the socialist meeting. He liked it. He felt a pride in his manner and his eloquence, and he smiled involuntarily whenever he thought of Steve's defence of himself, and his description of rich men in general. Then he usually permitted his mind to wander away in speculations which ended with the admission, "Steve is no such fool as one would think. He could manage my business, with my advice, just as well as he does his mother's trumpery benevolences — if he would — if he would — if his ideas about money were not all aslip and aslant, and if he was not as stubborn as a mule." So that as far as his home went, many years had passed since Steve had been able to visit it with so much satisfaction.

But when it came to his actual marriage with

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Jessie, Steve did not get the sympathy that he expected. Both Mrs. Lloyd and Alice felt as if there were hurry and mistake. When they had first thought of a wife for Steve it was as a last hope for his respectability; a kind of heroic treatment for which there now appeared no necessity. Jessie had gone out of date. They felt it difficult to accept her. Good women as they were, they were not above imagining Jessie's pride and satisfaction in finding out that she had captured the son of a millionaire in entertaining an unknown guest. They spoke of it to themselves with little sighs, and Alice, who had some imagination, pictured Jessie's excitement and pride in a variety of ways.

In reality the girl had taken the dénouement in a very different manner to any of Alice's suppositions. On that night when Nicholas Lloyd so unconsciously assisted in it, Steve, after seeing his father home, went directly to the McAslins' to finish the explanation. It was a little difficult for John to accept it, but he was honest enough to realise that his own hopes about Alice made this difficulty. Steve then went exhaustively into the circumstances that had made him a wanderer; and when John complained, and with some reason, of the confidence withheld from his best friends, Steve

I MUST SEE JESSIE

fortified his position by a positive assurance that his only motive had been a desire to win Jessie's affection without a suspicion of money influencing her. He then explained the purpose, and the payment of his mother's proposal, and showed the ring she had sent Jessie and the check given for their home-making.

So John put the little selfish ache in his heart down below all show of feeling, and gave Steve his hand in token of their renewed friendship and alliance. There had evidently been an effort of some evil influence to thwart Steve's happiness, but his clear honesty drove away all suspicions. And pray, how many of us are proof against the prospect and power of money? Mr. and Mrs. McAslin were both excited over the circumstance, Mrs. McAslin's pride being also strongly tinged with a pious sentimentality. Considering her early relations with Nicholas Lloyd, and his cruelty to her, she found it easy and satisfactory to relegate the whole affair to a just and retributive Providence. She was so anxious for Jessie's return that she could not sleep by night nor eat by day, and the solemn importance of her countenance impressed her daughter before she had taken the pins out of her hat.

"What is the matter, mother?" she asked nervously. "Has anything gone wrong? Has

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

any one done wrong? You look as if you had
more to carry than you could bear."

"A very strange thing has happened, Jessie.
We have found out something about Steve."

"You have found out nothing wrong, I am
sure, mother. I won't believe that you have
done that. I won't! I won't!"

"His name is not Morrison. Morrison is
only his middle name."

"What of that? I am going to marry Steve,
right or wrong,—and I do not fear any wrong
that may come through him. If his name is not
Morrison, pray what is it?"

"Lloyd!"

"Hum! it might be worse, and it might be
better; that is, if names have any influence over
the people that bear them. I wonder if he is
any relative of the Nicholas Lloyds?"

"He is the son of Nicholas Lloyd."

"Oh! the brother of Alice Lloyd, then?"

"Yes."

"I am rather glad of it. That accounts for
much and sundry!" Poor Jessie! Her face
flushed rosy, her whole attitude became suffused
with a well-controlled but haughty satisfaction.
She felt that she must be alone in order to
realise properly the good fortune that had come
to her.

When Steve came home to dinner she was

I MUST SEE JESSIE

shy but gracious. She had put on her best dress and given her appearance an air of holiday. He took her part at once. He gave her his mother's ring and message, and showed her the generous check which was to prepare their home. The interest of all this was so wonderful and so great that dinner was half over when they came hand in hand to the table. Their eyes were shining with happy tears; they were above and beyond hunger; they had had food to eat that God gives but rarely in life—the food of heaven—the satisfying joy of perfect love. Indeed, they could talk as little as they could eat. They were too happy to say how happy they were. But it was Steve only that felt that sensitive deprecation of great happiness which fears to wound by too much evidence of joy before those who are less fortunate.

The weeks which followed these incidents were weeks of unparalleled pleasure to Jessie. She selected her own home, an uptown flat, with all the adornments and conveniences which have taught people with limited incomes unlimited extravagance. Then she necessarily furnished it up to the walls, and mantels, and mirrors, showing such exquisite taste and delight in the work that Steve could not find it in his heart to name the expense to her. Her wedding garments also were to order, and be-

22



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

tween the house and the modiste, she found herself every night exceedingly weary and exceedingly happy. A street costume of dark silk that could do service afterwards had been Jessie's first idea of a wedding gown, but the house so enlarged her conceptions of what was beautiful and proper, that the dark silk was given up for white satin. Then the small home wedding, with only their most intimate friends present, was resigned; the white satin dress asked for a church ceremonial, to which every one she knew could be invited.

These changes came so naturally and so gradually, and were so bewitchingly advised, that Steve had no power to deny his sanction. "You see, Steve," she argued, "anybody can go to a church. There will be no sense of degradation in going there, but your family would not like to come to a little flat near St. Mark's Place, and it would be a great pity to begin our relationship with a sense of scorn and a feeling of unkindness. We must keep good friends, eh, dear?"

This argument seemed reasonable to Steve. He could find nothing to say against it. The church being granted, it naturally demanded the accessories of a church wedding. Jessie affirmed it, and Steve's own experience proved her assertion. This point gained, it followed

I MUST SEE JESSIE

that all her old pupils, all her friends and acquaintances, every respectable person she knew, must swell the crowd who would gather on the seventh of February to do her honour.

Nothing could possibly have been more at variance with Steve's desires and opinions. He thought, with grim smiles, of his socialist confrères, and imagined the words they would say to him. He thought of himself tramping through the Rockies and fiddling and singing to the birds. He thought of himself driving cattle, working before the mast, cutting wheat, rolling barrels, in fact in every antagonistic condition that he had filled. But he could not smile at the contrast; he was too much in love to oppose Jessie's desires in anything, and he told himself that it was the obvious duty of the bridegroom to submit to every whim of the bride,—yet somehow the vision of Hercules with a distaff instead of a club always slipped into these reminiscences.

The seventh of February brought this condition of enthusiastic devotion to a climax. Steve would have sworn on that morning that all and everything was a too small concession to the satin-robed, bewitching little woman who laid her hand in his with such a charming confidence. At that moment, neither of them knew or cared who was, or who was not, present.

100



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

But the outside world noticed that Mrs. Lloyd alone represented Steve's immediate family, and the criticisms on this shabby support were as various as the people uttering them.

"Old Lloyd was afraid he would have to give a big check."

"The girl was a music teacher, and Mrs. Lloyd a Valliante. The Valliantes are a very proud family. I don't suppose the Lloyds have any family to talk of."

"But so few people have."

"We must speak as we know. My own family is very, very old. I wonder at Miss Lloyd's absence. She is said to be so amiable."

"She adored her brother. Girls who adore their brother do not usually adore that brother's wife."

"Do you think so? Now my sister-in-law worships me. She asks my advice about everything."

"What a phenomenon! You are to be hugely congratulated."

"I heard Miss Lloyd was sick."

"She has chagrin. You know she is engaged — to Lord Medway."

"Oh! that match is off, I assure you. Here comes the bride! Is she not pretty?"

"Is that Steve Lloyd? Why! how changed he is! The man is positively and audaciously handsome."

I MUST SEE JESSIE

"Gentlemanly, too; and I have heard such dreadful reports about him."

"Hush! The service begins."

And what a marvellous service it was to Steve! Mystical, wonderful words that gave him the right to take from her father and mother, and brother and sister, the woman he loved, and bind her to his own life and soul for ever. He was conscious of nothing but this stupendous gift and obligation. The words of the officiating minister beat on his ears and heart as if they came from afar off, and with some special authority. He was astonished at his own voice, and the slipping of the ring on Jessie's hand was a miracle of grace. Jessie was at last his wife. A delicious destiny led them to a waiting carriage; they entered it with happy words in their ears; they were alone in the travel and traffic of the streets, and anon, they stepped over the threshold of their own home. The world bade them Godspeed! and left them, and their future happiness was in their own hands.

The suppositions of the company regarding the absence of Mr. Lloyd and Miss Lloyd were as correct as suppositions usually are. Nicholas Lloyd — whose behaviour had been lately more and more erratic and contradictory — gave no reason for absenting himself from his son's marriage, except a general disapproval of his son's

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1

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

conduct. "Steve will do nothing to please me," he said to Steve's mother, "and therefore he has no right to expect anything from me." Alice's absence was absolutely beyond her control. She was prostrate with a nervous headache, which did not suffer her to move, or speak, or endure the light. She said truly enough, that if it had been her own wedding service, she could not have been present. The world, however, put its own construction on her absence, and John was not more charitable. He believed that she remained away to prevent meeting him under circumstances which would demand if not familiarity, at least a show of friendliness.

For the admitted relationship of Steve to his sister had produced precisely the effects John foresaw. Alice did not really say "This is enough of the McAslins," but she felt it, and she permitted herself to act upon that feeling. She kept out of John's way. If forced to meet him, she withdrew her sweetest self, and gave him only a polite courtesy which he had no power to refuse, and yet which he felt to be a great cruelty when offered in lieu of those nameless evidences of interest — yes, of affection — which had sweetened his life and made his days one bright hope.

The injustice of her action was a conscious one. She regretted the wrong, she frequently

I MUST SEE JESSIE

resolved to atone for it, she wondered why she should make herself and John miserable because she had taken a dislike to Jessie; but a perverse spirit ruled her whenever an opportunity offered of putting the wrong right. Honestly she had intended to make the marriage ceremony a kind of day of atonement; she had prepared a dress of wonderful beauty to emphasise her submission to events, and then all her kind intentions were frustrated by circumstances quite beyond her control.

Her experiences in society during the winter had also greatly embarrassed her attitude towards John McAslin. She had been questioned and twitted and congratulated about the Medway affair, until she felt it would require a great effort to escape the net of circumstances binding her to it. There were days when she did not think she cared to make this effort, when luxurious appointments and beautiful living and the glamour of riches and honours were set in such sharp contrast to poverty, and all the unlovely straits of life, that to prevent contact with or even knowledge of them seemed a personal duty. God had set her in pleasant places, why should she then go down into the valley of Baca and make it a well, or else suffer its misery and drought? was the almost angry question in her heart.

100

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

John divined this struggle in the girl's feelings, for a pure love knows best of all the things that are never told. But he made no attempt to interfere; he knew that Alice's decision to bring happiness to them must be self-evolved. And yet while his dearest hopes were thus held in abeyance he did not suffer as Alice did. The longing for John's respect and regard never left her heart; never once did she feel that his opinion "made no difference." On the contrary, her first thought about every event that touched her was, "What will John think of it?" This pervading quality in love is essentially a feminine attribute; the great majority of men remain unconscious of the strength of their affections, for their occupations prevent them making them, as women do, the subject of their constant contemplation. So, then, while Alice's love flavoured all the small exercises and social functions of her days, John's—though of really more vigorous and potent character—was compelled to give place to duties that were necessary and imperative.

Indeed, his duties as regarded Mr. Lloyd had gradually assumed not only a very extensive, but also a very grave character. It was impossible any longer to ignore the changes that had taken place in the man. These changes, remittent and insidious, had puzzled John so much

I MUST SEE JESSIE

at first that he had come to believe there were two Nicholas Lloyds, and that sometimes the one and sometimes the other had the ascendancy. One of these was a prudent, forecasting, far-seeing business man; the other a reckless, plunging, visionary speculator. One was a man of extreme dignity, inclined to avarice, reticent and reserved; the other was a practical joker, boastful, extravagant, and egotistical. The latter character at the beginning of his engagement came only very seldom to the front, but it had now become alarmingly evident, and in the early summer John felt that Mrs. Lloyd's attention, if not already drawn to the fact, ought to be aroused.

One day, while these thoughts were forced upon him, a letter from Lord Medway arrived. Mr. Lloyd was greatly excited. He read it to John with such extravagant comments as "She must be willing—I'll have no drawbacks now—I'll give her all I promised and ten times more—I'll give her the State of New York if he wants it—she is going to be a lady. She may become a countess—she may be anything she likes—I'll find the cash for it—John, I want you to write to Lord Medway at once—No, I'll write myself. I'll double Miss Lloyd's fortune—"

"Sir, permit me to write for you," said John.

21



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"It is not well to let these Englishmen value themselves too much."

"To be sure," he answered with a sudden caution. "I thought last year he did not think enough of my girl and my money."

"He could not, sir, for the first article of the creed in which Lord Medway has been brought up is, the inherent superiority of Englishmen. They not only call all other nations 'foreigners,' but they feel that their existence is an anomaly hard to be explained, without discrediting a wise and good Providence."

"Come, come, John! You are too hard. Medway is a fine fellow; and any woman that marries him is a fortunate woman. I will answer him myself."

There was then no more to be said; but that afternoon John went out to Lloyd Park to see Mrs. Lloyd. She received him with enthusiasm. She was honestly glad to see him, and he let him feel her pleasure. Then she entered at once into a description of what she had accomplished and of what she was doing. John told her he had seen her new "Homes" and said they were all that could be desired. He did not tell her, however, how severely he had heard working-men and women criticise them. He did not tell her that the children quite neglected the play-room she had made for

I MUST SEE JESSIE

them, and still played, by preference, in the streets. He did not tell her that the women refused to use the common laundry, and resolutely did their washing in their kitchens. He could have pointed out these and many other disagreeable results of her efforts, but since Steve had not named them, he also kept silent.

He understood Steve's motive, for one day he said to him very despondently: "John, I see that men and women have to be taught to love order and cleanliness. They are no more natural products than are honour and truth. Here and there a soul brings such attributes into the world with it; but mostly, they have to be acquired. And when men and women have learned dirty, slovenly ways, how can you expect them to undo old habits, and learn new ones by simply putting them into new conditions? It won't work." Then John had asked: "What is to be done, Steve? Can you not reason with them?" and Steve had answered:

"Reason with ignorant men and women set in their own ways and opinions? You might as well go about to convince a bull! I have come to the decision that progress is a plant that grows very slowly. We can't have an era per annum, John; and yet the temper of to-day looks to results, and to results rapidly achieved. Do we take centuries to raise elaborate cathe-

2



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

drals now? No, we build our modern churches on contract. That illustrates our ideals; whether they be good or bad, I am not prepared to say."

Steve made these remarks with such an air of despondency and utter weariness that it troubled John for many days, and this feeling was renewed on his visit to Mrs. Lloyd's, for he met Steve in the park with just the same dissatisfied expression.

"What is the matter with you, Steve?" he asked, laying his arm across his brother-in-law's shoulder.

"Oh, John, how good it is to see you! What is the matter? The old, tired-of-everything feeling. Life is such a monotonous grind, for no good end, that I can see. Here is mother wasting her money and her life, and not one of the people she is trying to help cares whether she lives or dies."

"Gratitude is the last virtue learned, Steve. Your mother is not working for the gratitude of any man or woman, or she might as well give up at once. I am sorry she is not well. Your father, I think, is seriously ill. He ought to go away from business of every kind. Travel might be good for Mrs. Lloyd also. I am going to speak to her about it. How is Jessie?"

"Well — but —"

"But what?"

I MUST SEE JESSIE

"Nothing — she has the disease also."

"What disease?"

"She is out of love with life. That 'something' that infects the world has touched her as well as the rest of us. We are a lot of dissatisfied creatures. There are so many things to want now, and we want them all. I would like to be in the heart of the mountains to-day with a crust and a fiddle, and a stream of running water." He laughed as he said the words, and went off at his usual swinging pace, with a backward look at John full of feeling. And John was more troubled than he had been before. Steve was changed. How he was changed he could not instantly say, his clear face reflected such a complexity of emotion; but as he went forward to Mrs. Lloyd's room he suddenly said to himself, and without any reasoning towards the decision, "I must see Jessie."

This thought was with him all the time he was listening to Mrs. Lloyd's plans and expectations. Of Steve's depression she said nothing, so that it was likely Steve had kept his trouble — whatever it was — to himself, and John felt no obligation to bring it to her notice. He spoke, however, with great emphasis about Mr. Lloyd's eccentricities, which he said "could be no longer regarded as peculiarities of temperament."

20

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"You think he is ill?"

"I do. Lord Medway's letter to-day excited him very much."

"Ah! Did you see the letter? What was its purport? Why did it excite him?"

"Mr. Lloyd read me the letter. Lord Medway desires to fulfil his engagement with Miss Lloyd."

"There is no engagement between them."

"Lord Medway believes there is."

"Such engagements depend finally on the lady. Miss Lloyd has made no decision. I ought to know that, and I do know that. I thank you for the information you give me concerning Mr. Lloyd's health. I have long been watching the same peculiarities. Advise him, I beg you, to see Dr. Anson at once. I will do the same. If he will not go to the doctor then the doctor must be sent to him, and he must be compelled to listen to the truth." She laid her face in her hands, and her attitude of sorrowful abstraction gave John excuse enough to quietly leave her presence.

He took a certain path through the garden, leading to a small shady lawn much frequented by Alice. She was sitting—as he hoped she would be—under the trees. Her sewing lay on the grass at her feet. She had a letter in her hand. He looked at her with all his soul

I MUST SEE JESSIE

in his eyes. There was a change even in her. She was no longer the lovely maid with heart untouched, singing and smiling in the morning of life. A shadow of trouble and perplexity was on her face, and John caught this expression before she saw him coming, and it gave him some confidence and comfort. For he knew intuitively that the letter in her hand was from Lord Medway, and that she was thinking about its contents, and yet the expression on her face was not that of a woman dreaming happily of her lover; it was that of one who weighs and considers, who is perplexed and suffers, and is in a strait betwixt two.

She rose as John came near her and slipped the letter into her work-bag. The trees, bending and swaying above her, had a look as irresolute as herself as she stood waiting for John's approach. They met silently, and she was the first to speak. The words were all questions: her hand trembled as it lay in John's hand, and she was nervously at the point of tears.

"Have you been well? Is it not a fine day? Have you seen mother—and the bees as you came by the limes, are they not busy?" she asked with that pretence of interest which would fain believe itself the true one.

John answered none of these questions. He said simply: "Will you sit down again or do

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

You prefer to walk? I have something to say to you."

She sat down and John stood leaning against the tree at her side. "Alice," he said, "I came here purposely to find you. Unfaithfulness is a thing I have never understood, yours least of all. Tell me before we part forever what I said or did to deserve your anger or indifference."

"Do not say 'indifference.' I have never been indifferent to you, never since the hour we met. Some things have angered or annoyed me, and others have drawn me this way or that way from you. Also you are much to blame, for you have come more and more seldom to the house; you have avoided me when you did come; you have worn an air of injury that was unjust to me, because, at first, there was no reason for it."

"In short, dear Alice, there has been a thorough misunderstanding."

"One that you might have explained away while it was but a little shadow. You were too proud to do so. You were too busy with money, and real estate, and political and social questions to care for my trifling feelings. If I had been an over-worked factory hand you would, perhaps, have wondered what made me so pale and unhappy, but because I am rich, you were sure I cared only for myself, or that I was false and proud."

I MUST SEE JESSIE

"These are hard charges, Alice. I think they are not fair ones."

"Do me the justice to think a little longer and you will understand how fair they are."

"I would much rather throw myself on your mercy. If you have even thought me wrong, then I have been wrong. Forgive me, dearest. I know we must part, but I cannot bear to part in anger."

"You know we must part. So you come to tell me so — to renew all my love for you — to make me feel wretched in the losing of you — if you can. This is your love! I think it a very selfish thing. I would have slipped out of your heart softly and imperceptibly, as unobserved in my going as possible. I would rather have been misjudged than have given you an additional heartache. I would rather myself have suffered wrong than let you suffer from wounded love and self-appreciation. If love is not unselfish it is nothing at all. 'You know we must part,' this is what you seek me out to tell — Oh, John! How cruel! If we are to part why should you try to give me more heartache?"

"Alice! Alice! I love you. I love you only. I shall love you for ever. Forgive what has been wrong or unkind."

"When forgiveness is asked too late, it is an additional wrong. You know that Lord Med-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

way has renewed his offer — you must have seen his letter to my father — and now you try to embarrass my actions, to prejudice my future, to disappoint my father, to make me miserable by coming to me as you have done. John, it was a cruel thing to do, it was a foolish thing also, for it sets my heart in revolt against you."

Alice rose as she said these words. Her face was pale but resolute, and John was confounded and distressed by the attitude she had taken. He was totally unprepared for it. He hardly knew what he had expected, certainly nothing like this tone of accusation, and for a moment he was shaken to the very citadel of his being by the truth as Alice saw it. It is, however, the business of Reason and Experience to fence off Truth and to defy impressions, and John almost instantly began the process.

Alice, however, was not inclined to prolong the interview, and if John had understood the women better he would have seen that she was at that extreme tension that soon makes the strongest impatient and hysterical. It required all her efforts to preserve the quiet dignity of manner she had assumed. She was impatient to be alone and free to give herself relief from a restraint so painful and exhausting. What he said of excuse and penitence was hardly

I MUST SEE JESSIE

comprehended; she only knew that neither of them had dared to touch the real cause of offence — it seemed so shamefully small and unjust — his sensitive knowledge of her dislike to Steve's marriage, and her unreasonable aversion to Steve's wife. They were making shipwreck of their love, and it was their own fault. There was no storm, it was the little leak in the boat itself that invited destruction; a leak they could easily have stopped, if they would only have recognised its presence.

As it was, John could not prolong so unsatisfactory an interview. He offered her his hand, and she took it, and there were tears in her eyes as she did so. For a moment it lay in his hand, then he bowed his head and kissed it. "Farewell, Alice," he said, and with a great sigh he turned and went quickly down the path leading to the gateway. It was all over. Alice as yet hardly realised her suffering; the pang of conflict with it was to come; but as she sat very quiet under the trees, the delicate antennæ of the soul began to tell her it was near. John had more hope, for though he felt that a great silence and coldness had fallen over his life, he was an unconscious believer in sequences. He said to himself, "I will not despair. Very few events break off in an absolute way, and threads that are dropped may be lifted again.

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

She loves me yet. I love her. That we are to be parted forever is an incredible thing: Destiny is reserving her best gifts, that is all — and I seem to have made mistakes — I have not understood a woman so proud and sensitive — I must think this thing fairly out — doubtless it is my fault." He was silent, after this admission, for a long time, but finally reached what he believed to be the first right step —

"I must see Jessie." Suddenly he remembered Steve, and he asked himself anxiously "what was the matter with Steve? — I must see Jessie."

CHAPTER IX

JESSIE'S AMBITION AND NICHOLAS LLOYD'S FAILURE

JOHN was not in the fairest of tempers when he arrived at Jessie's home, and her appearance further irritated him. She had grown physically much handsomer since her marriage, and she dressed herself with consummate taste and effect, but she did not please her brother. There was the same air of insurgent dissatisfaction on her face that there is on the surface of the sea after a passing storm. Her mood explained Steve's mood, and both of them emphatically declared a wrong of some kind; so much so, that John's first remark was, —

"What is the matter now, Jessie?"

"Oh, life is such a disappointment, John! Nothing turns out as it promises."

"Sometimes it turns out better, as it did between you and Steve. Who would have thought he could have furnished you such a lovely home? And what a becoming gown you have on! A remarkably lucky woman I call you."

2000



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"I don't know about that. When we are sure things are beyond our means, we do not long for them, any more than we do for Queen Victoria's jewels; but when we see the desire of our heart within our reach, and are prevented from taking it by an unreasonable man, then we are naturally indignant."

"Do you mean Steve? And in what does he prevent your happiness?"

"I want to go into the society Mrs. Stephen Lloyd ought to go into. I want Steve to do what his father wishes him to do. It is all well enough for a man to follow his own vagaries when he is unmarried, but after he has a wife, she ought to be consulted. Steve won't do a single thing I ask him to do."

"Then I am sure you ask very unreasonable things."

"I don't! I don't! I only ask the place he gave me. Fancy Nicholas Lloyd's only son living in a miserable little sixty-dollars-a-month flat! We ought to have a house on the avenue, and a cottage at Newport, and what is more, I mean to have them."

"Then you will have to have them without Steve. I can tell you that, you ungrateful, unreasonable woman! Do you prefer a fine house to your husband?"

"Nonsense! There is no use talking heroics

JESSIE'S AMBITION

to me, John. I want my husband in a proper house, that is all. What is the good of money, if you do not do yourself good with it?"

"Money! money! money! I wish I could get out of the sound of the word!"

"You cannot. Life runs to it. If love used to make the world go round, it is money that does it now. Steve ought to have hundreds of thousands of dollars; he might have them if he had a bit of sense, and then he could let me travel and dress and do as I want to do."

"You want hundreds of thousands of dollars to travel and dress and amuse yourself?"

"Yes, I do. I could spend millions comfortably. I want a town-house, a cottage at Newport, a pretty steam-yacht, fast horses, fine stables and carriages, and a Parisian modiste."

"Did you tell Steve your ambitions before you married him?"

"My ambitions have grown. They were but scrubby little intentions when I married. Why should we not live as handsomely as Alice Lloyd does?"

"Alice has money of her own. Her mother is very rich. Her father is very rich. You know how poor we are, and how poor we have always been. Jessie, don't be a foolish woman, and throw away love for gold. It won't pay you. You will be very wretched."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"If Alice married you, she would be expected to share your poverty. Why then should not I expect to share Steve's riches?"

"Steve is poor. He resigned all right to his father's money when he refused to assist his father in making and taking care of it. Nicholas Lloyd will leave him nothing; Steve does not expect a cent from him; more, he does not want a cent; more, he has no right to a cent."

"He has. He is Nicholas Lloyd's son."

"There is a right far greater than birth—the right of obedience and duty. Nicholas Lloyd had the right to expect this duty and obedience in the precise way that seemed good to him. Steve, having come to man's estate and knowledge, had the right to render that duty, and expect the recompense for it; or he had the right to refuse the duty and resign its reward. Steve could not conscientiously do the duty his father asked; he declined to perform it, and he is much too honourable to expect results which he has refused to earn. That is the whole case, Jessie; Steve will never be a rich man through his father. Mrs. Lloyd may leave him a competence. I do not think she will do more. She has already discovered that he does not know the value of money."

"Indeed! Do you really acknowledge the

JESSIE'S AMBITION

value of money? I thought you were among the scorners."

"I know that money is the grandest of powers; I know its value thoroughly. It is the mammon of righteousness as well as of unrighteousness—"

"For goodness' sake, John, don't preach." Then she suddenly stopped, for she heard her husband's step, and her face clouded, and she threw herself backward in her chair with an air of indifference to every earthly thing.

It pained John deeply to mark the change that had come over both husband and wife. There was no hurrying to meet each other, no kiss, no fond inquiries, no haste to bring refreshment and comfort. Jessie preserved her indolent attitude, and kept her eyes on the fine handkerchief, whose lace she plaited and unplaited in her fingers. Steve said only, "Well, Jessie, still in the blues?" and giving John his hand, he sat down by the open window. He looked like a man thoroughly out of temper with life and with all life's duties and belongings.

"John," he said, after a minute's silence, "I am thinking of the mountains—the mountains a long way off—the Rockies. What would I not give to hide myself in their cool solitudes to-day!"

"Then why do you not go there, Steve?"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

asked Jessie, with a provoking and yet alluring nonchalance.

"You may ask that question once too often, Jessie," he answered.

She only laughed mirthfully, as if the covert threat amused her, and John, anxious to turn the wretched conversation, said:—

"Your sister will marry Lord Medway, I think, Steve. He has renewed his offer and all is now favourable."

"I am very sorry, John."

"A lucky thing for her," said Jessie. "Steve, I intend to go to the wedding. You must manage that for me, at least."

"I shall have nothing to do with the affair, Jessie. It is much against my wish. As to the people who will be present, mother and Alice will decide that matter. I shall not be there."

"I never saw such a family! Your sister would not come to your wedding, and now you are going to pay her back in her own coin. That is your Christianity, I suppose."

"Christianity has nothing to do with it. Alice could not come to our wedding. I told you that before. I don't know Lord Medway, and I don't want to know him. Alice and I understand each other."

"A good thing if you do. I defy any one else

JESSIE'S AMBITION

to make rhyme or reason out of either of your actions."

"Can we have dinner, Jessie?"

"I suppose so. Ring for it. Sit down, John."

"I will stay no longer, Jessie. I am sorry I came here." He arose angrily, and clasping Steve's hand, went away without a word to his foolish sister, though he heard her crying hysterically before he reached the outer door.

It seemed, then, as if Love was cruel, whether it was successful or unsuccessful; and if so, was it not better to get his disappointment before marriage? He forgot his own trouble in Steve's, which seemed so much more unnatural; and he found himself, at the close of every train of thought, ejaculating, "Poor Steve! Poor Steve!"

He did not know what good cause there was for his pity. In the few months that had elapsed since Steve's marriage, Jessie's desires had grown with the prodigious celerity that attends the increase of whatever is bad. Indeed, the very knowledge of Steve's parentage had been the dropping of the evil seed. It lay unseen during the first joy of their nuptials, but it was full of vitality, and steadily pushing its way to a more active condition. Before the honeymoon was over, she was contemptuous of all her pretty

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

surroundings, because her imagination had already furnished far more splendid habitations. She was well aware that these dreams depended for realisation on Steve's submission to his father's will and plans, and she was determined that he should submit. She introduced the subject continually. All their confidences and conversations ended in it. There was never a meal eaten that it did not spoil, for in some form it was present, either for discussion or for silent dissatisfaction. If Steve complained of weariness, he was told to take his proper place and work. If he spoke of the sorrows of the poor families he visited, he only introduced another phase of the daily quarrel; indeed, there was scarcely a circumstance of life that was not a text from which to preach the same sermon.

Had Steve been an ordinary man, such persistence of attack might have succeeded, but he was not an ordinary man. Had he been cast in the common mould, he would never have closed his ledger and given up his fine financial prospects in order to live the life of simple freedom he desired to live. Jessie might have understood from his antecedents that her husband had a will equal to her own, and that in any contest about a point so vital she would not find him an easy conquest. But she had that womanly habit of mind that sees only one side

JESSIE'S AMBITION

of a question, and the still more womanly habit of converging all her forces into one form of attack. Jessie saw clearly the social position she desired to occupy; she understood that it must come through Steve's compliance; and all her powers were used to force this compliance. He had been complacent on all subjects but this one; here she found all the sweet stratagems that love employs to compass its desires useless, and she finally abandoned them and began a course of nagging sarcasms, sullen dissenting, or miserable complaining, that would have brought any man of vague character to what she considered a reasonable submission.

Jessie's conduct had a contrary effect on Steve. Above all things, Steve loved justice. No one could coax him beyond his conscience, and he was not to be worried into doing wrong for the sake of peace. Of course he suffered. Every one of his wife's tantrums was like a storm that stretched and strained his heart-strings nearly asunder. He felt that some day the point of breaking might arrive, and he trembled in the fear, for he still loved the foolishly ambitious woman. That day he had come home very needful of comfort. The hot weather had given him an overpowering longing for the peace of mountain solitudes and the freedom of a life without dinner-time and dressing for it. If

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Jessie had met him with a kiss and a loving word, if she had pitied his longing a little, if she had sung to him some lulling melody as he sat by the open window, then he could have mastered the spirit craving within him, and bent his will to hers in everything necessary for their happiness.

But the first sight of her rebellious beauty, and of John's troubled face, roused in him a resistance she little understood. When John shut the door behind her crying, Steve shut his heart against the same irritating sound. He would not soothe it, he would not listen to it, he sat gloomy and silent until there was a cessation of the storm. Then he said: "I am hungry, Jessie."

"Dinner is ready; go and get it," she answered. "I don't want to eat. I am ill. I have no appetite."

He went; he ate his dinner alone, and Jessie, who did want to eat, was incensed by his obedience. She expected him to coax her to the dining-room. It was the first time he had ever taken her at her word. If she had been wise she would have pondered the meaning of that step. On his return to her presence, he said: —

"Now, Jessie, go and eat. I will not disturb you."

JESSIE'S AMBITION

"I have told you I have no appetite. I want a change of air. I want to go to the sea-side. The doctor says I must go."

"You never left New York in the summer before."

"I was never married before."

"That is true. Well, then, you must make inquiries about some place that we can afford. We are lots in debt, but I don't suppose your going away will make much difference."

"Indeed it will. I want to go to Newport. Alice is going, your mother is going, and I want to go also."

"I cannot afford Newport, Jessie."

"Then I shall go anyway. Your name will get me credit. Alice and Mrs. Lloyd will be compelled to notice me; indeed, they may as well entertain me as not."

"Jessie, neither I nor you have a right to intrude on my family. Mother has already paid a great deal for us."

"She ought to give you far more than she does."

"She gives me sufficient. I will ask her for no more."

"Then I shall."

"If you beg or borrow money in my name, I will never forgive you."

"We shall see."

At these words Steve rose, and taking his hat

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

from a table, threw over in his reckless haste a trifle of glassware with a rose in it. The glass was shattered to pieces, the rose lay on the table, and the water ran down upon the pretty carpet. Jessie rose in a passion. "Oh, my lovely vase!" she cried. "Oh, my lovely vase! It is broken to pieces! Look what you have done, sir!" But Steve did not turn his head; he pressed his hat down on his brows, and left the house with that unmistakable clash at the door which is a declaration of domestic war. And Jessie picked up the bits of her broken vase and wet them with her angry tears, but she did not remember the shattered love in the great affectionate heart of the man her evil temper had just driven from his home.

These events introduced a summer full of change to the Lloyd family. The first of importance was the recognised engagement of Miss Lloyd to Lord Medway, and immediately after it Mrs. Lloyd accompanied her daughter to Newport. Both circumstances took place without any participation on the part of Steve. He had already refused to meet the foreign nobleman who was to marry his sister and receive so large a slice of the Lloyd estate, and Jessie's rebellious indignation, both at his refusal and at his family's acceptance of it, probably induced a certain amount of stubbornness in

JESSIE'S AMBITION

Steve's actions. Jessie blamed Alice entirely. She was sure that Alice had great influence over her brother, and she thought she understood that as Steve's presence must have included hers, Alice preferred to do without her brother's support rather than permit her to have any share in the bridal ceremonies. In reality there was some truth in this surmise, but it arose from a feeling that was as yet carefully hidden in Alice's own heart. For, assure herself as she would, a certain irrefragable presentiment of unfulfilment pressed upon her, and she did feel that any trouble coming would be more intolerable by Jessie's intermeddling in it.

For herself she knew not whether this presentiment gave her the most pain or pleasure. That she was not in love with Lord Medway she frankly acknowledged; indeed, she had made one last effort to free herself from the entanglement which had somehow grown with the day and night around her. But this final appeal to her father had been met with such disastrous consequences to his already shattered health as to lead the physician in attendance to remonstrate almost angrily with her. For he could not believe the girl was in earnest, and so he characterised her attempt to deliberate as a cruel bit of affectation.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"It is pretty enough, Miss Lloyd," he said, "to hesitate and to stand with reluctant feet on the brink of matrimony, and no doubt it is stimulating to the bridegroom, but I can assure you it is death to your father;" and, wounded and offended by the frank remark, what could Alice do but avoid a repetition of a rebuke so unjust, and yet so beyond her power to answer?

So as the weeks went by she rode and walked and danced with her betrothed, and tried to forget that John McAslin had ever loved her. "Every one has something to sacrifice," she thought, "and how could I hope to be happy if I pleased myself and killed my father? And after all, what is a love match? Steve's was a love match if there ever was one, and yet he is not happy! I know it. I feel it in his words and manner. Perhaps, then, a marriage for duty may turn out as well as a marriage for love." And then she would rebel a little and protest, "I know not how I came into this snare."

Alas, she had not reflected in time that the slightest concession is the first ripple of circumstance, and that after it the tide rises, and the wave behind impels the wave before.

But even this slight revolt against destiny was one morning brought to truce, for while such thoughts were making her walk up and down the long parlour to their restless tenor, she

JESSIE'S AMBITION

saw a book that some visitor had been reading and left open, leaves downward. Her sense of order made her stop to shut the volume, and her eyes met the far-seeing eyes of the great Dryden, and these were the words he said to her: —

Receive my counsel and securely move,
Intrust thy fortune to the powers above;
Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want.

Lines noble in themselves, and serving as a finger-post to the still more beautiful and familiar ones: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall direct thy path."

When a certain destiny has been accepted it is natural and wise to make the best of whatever advantages it has. Alice was young and hopeful; and she was not insensible to the promises her lover made her.

For a few weeks she was happy; she put down resolutely all thoughts disloyal to her engagement; she suffered no regrets from the past to darken the horizon of a future which she was honourably bound to make joyful for others as well as herself. In the mean time she had whatever of passing éclat and pleasure were incidental to her betrothal, and she liked it. That she should do so was natural and honest.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

It would have been the merest affectation to pretend a sentimental regret, or to affect a sacrificial resignation to a fate which at least was not distasteful to her.

Still there was at the bottom of all her expectations a doubt that chilled her hopes and prevented her from relinquishing her affections. About the beginning of August this doubt became a fear. Nicholas Lloyd's condition was no longer subject to long or short intermissions of lucidity and comparative health. He had become quite inattentive to business, and his egotism and extravagance—moral perversions in direct opposition to his natural character—caused general remark. Physical changes just as striking were also in evidence, and his physician wrote in unmistakable terms to Mrs. Lloyd. "It is the beginning of the end with him," he said. "I think you should be here as soon as possible, and if Mr. Lloyd has not yet arranged his business affairs and made his will, you must tell him I say he has no time to lose."

This letter was of the gravest importance as regards Alice's affairs, and for a while Mrs. Lloyd hardly knew how to act. A delay in her marriage would be most unfortunate, and yet it was not possible for her to urge its immediate consummation. Nor could she keep this sorrow in her own heart; it was necessary to take Alice

JESSIE'S AMBITION

at once into its sad intricacies. She found her in her room sewing and singing to her hopes. "Alice," she said, "I have sad news this morning, my dear. Your father is seriously ill, and Dr. Anson thinks I ought to return immediately to New York."

"Cannot father come here? If you go to New York, I must also go. And to leave Newport in the height of the season, mother, is so remarkable. What will Arthur think of it?"

"Your father cannot come here. He requires the constant medical care he can only get in New York; also there is much business to settle—and numberless other things. I, at least, must go home at once."

For a few minutes Alice could not speak. The thing that she feared had happened to her. Her heart turned faint as she thought of all the humiliations and disappointments that were sure to come. She wanted to weep and she could not. She turned her mind this way and that way to see if perhaps some means of escape could not be found for her. It was useless; she could only imagine one outlet—an immediate informal marriage. And there was something to her apprehension unspeakably selfish even in the unuttered wish for such an escape—she could not name it. Yet she was not sorry to hear her mother say:—

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— 125 —

114

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Arthur must now be told the whole truth. We can no longer attribute to eccentricity of character what is really mortal disease. When he understands that your father must necessarily grow worse and worse, and that the only hope of relief is in death, and when he considers that death means at least a year's delay in deference to family and social feeling, I am sure he will urge an immediate marriage. I should agree to it, Alice. Of course it must be of the simplest character, but I think your father would be glad to know that his greatest hope was fully accomplished. I am going to make preparations for our return, and you had better send at once for Arthur."

"He will be here in an hour. I need a little time to consider, mother. I am very sorrowful." Then she laid her head on her mother's breast, and was comforted as far as mother-love could comfort her.

But her heart was heavy with premonition of trouble. For the past ten days she had been conscious of some difference in her lover, — a difference that could scarcely be called a change, but which might easily grow to change. It had begun with the advent of Miss Adelaide Leavenworth into Newport society, and Adelaide Leavenworth had always been unfortunate to her. As girls in the same school, they had been

JESSIE'S AMBITION

constant rivals for every distinction, and Adelaide had always won. She had an irrepressible "go" about her, she was beautiful in a modern way, — that is, she had style and *chic* with a preponderance of the nervous system. Her dresses were marvellous creations, and she had a fortune in her own power that was more than equal to the rather grudging generosity of Nicholas Lloyd.

For two years the girls had not met, and then unexpectedly one night, as Alice was promenading with Lord Medway, they came together face to face. "Why, Alice!" cried Adelaide, with affected delight, "is it really you?" And then she received the introduction to Lord Medway, which was her object in speaking to Alice, and by one upward and downward glance captured his curiosity and interest. After that meeting their intimacy had grown rapidly, for either chance or management had constantly thrown them together, and Alice had suffered often from a sense of wrong she found it impossible to characterise. Now, if she had to leave Newport, she resigned the field to her enemy, — for such she really felt Adelaide to be, — and she suffered in anticipation all the little slings her clever sarcastic tongue was sure to indulge itself in.

The only possible escape from this dilemma

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

was her mother's suggestion, and surely if Lord Medway was in earnest he would only be too glad to anticipate his marriage-day. But she did not find him so.

Alice fancied that there was a sense of pleasure or relief in the inevitable delay which her father's condition involved. If the idea of an immediate marriage occurred to him he did not entertain it. He simply professed the greatest sympathy and disappointment; but he made no effort to take the advantage it offered, and Alice was dumbly injured by his attitude. And yet how could she complain? The man had said everything that was conventionally kind and respectful. But, oh, how little that was! For how poor are the words when deeds are possible! And how ineffectual the love that falls short of love's expectations! There was not a word uttered which could indicate the loosening of the tie between them, and yet Alice said "farewell" with a conviction that the tie was broken for ever.

So she returned to New York with her mother, and the closed house was reopened and Dr. Anson notified of their arrival. He called on them at once, and in accord with Mrs. Lloyd's pathetic entreaties, promised to see her husband and urge upon him the absolute necessity of relinquishing affairs which he

JESSIE'S AMBITION

could only bring to confusion and ruin. He had frequently had a similar duty to perform, but custom had not robbed it of its sad and awful circumstance, and it was always a pitifully conscientious act. He made several little delays on the way to Mr. Lloyd's office, but the inevitable arrives, and at last he was admitted to the rich man's presence. Mr. Lloyd had a letter from Lord Medway's lawyer in his hand, and his passion over its contents was extreme. "The man professes to be doubtful about the securities I offer him," he said, and the tremor of his tongue and lips hardly permitted him to articulate.

"Mr. Lloyd," said the physician, laying his hand firmly on the millionaire's shaking form, "Mr. Lloyd, you must stop business altogether. I have come here especially to tell you to do so. Listen to me, for I am in earnest, and I am going to tell you a great truth. You are a dying man. If you had a weak, cowardly soul I would not tell you the truth, but you are no poltroon, so I say plainly to you, settle your affairs with this world. Make your will if it is yet to make, and then prepare to meet your God."

These words were spoken with the utmost solemnity, and the miserable man to whom they were addressed listened perforce to them

200



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Hitherto he had refused all attempts at warning, but this morning his condition made him passively silent, as the fateful words smote and smote upon his brain and entered and pierced his ears like a dart. He tried to protest—to entreat—but his tongue failed, and he buried his head in his hands and wept like a child.

When he was able to draw his scattered forces together, and to uncover his face, he found himself alone. The physician had delivered his message and left him to digest it in solitude. He went to a little closet and took out of it a mirror and looked at himself. Then he rang a bell sharply, and sent the clerk who answered it for his lawyer. And whatever of misery a money-maker and a money-lover can feel in the prospect of resigning his occupation for ever, Nicholas Lloyd then felt. He looked round his familiar office as men look farewell on a scene beloved. Its solid splendour, its air of riches, its big chair, from which he had issued financial edicts,—were these things no longer his? He opened his private safe and took out a canvas bag, and let the gold slip and slide through his fingers, and laughed aloud as he did so. He gathered in one swoop securities of the first value, and fingered them backward and forward, and assured himself that he was yet their lawful owner.

JESSIE'S AMBITION

He was comforting himself in this manner when the summoned lawyer arrived. "Phillips," he said, with an excitement which shivered his words to pieces as they fell from his lips, "Phillips, have I not made my will? If not I am to make it this morning. Dr. Anson has just given me the order. Sit down, sir. What are you gazing at? Confound you."

"Mr. Lloyd, in Heaven's name what is the matter with you?"

"I have received my — death warrant — that is all. Get to work, sir. Give me a minute or two and I will be calm and clear enough — hard lines though — hard lines." He sat perfectly still, grasping the arms of his chair, and Mr. Phillips, though very sceptical about the validity of any will made under such evident aberration of normal conditions, prepared to obey whatever the sick man desired.

"Go on, Phillips."

After a short pause the lawyer said, as he followed the transcribing pen: "I give and bequeath," then he looked into the face of his client for instructions. A very powerful expression of dissent was on it, and he raised his hand and brought it down with a frantic force as he said passionately: —

"I—I can't! I won't give and bequeath what is my own — my very own — I won't give

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

it! I won't bequeath it! It is mine. Mine only. I must keep it; yes, even in the grave, I must keep it. How can I keep it? If you are a lawyer worth your salt, Phillips, tell me that."

"Lend it, Mr. Lloyd, lend it to whoever you like. Lend it for good interest, and devise the interest for any purpose you choose. You are used to lending money; you can bear that."

"That will do! that will do! Yes, I can bear to lend it. But to whom?"

"That is the question. Your daughter is provided for?"

"Yes. She has taken more than enough to that greedy foreigner,—millions and millions, and a silver mine, and a southern plantation, and a Western ranch, and a vineyard in California, and other trifles—"

"What are you talking about, Mr. Lloyd? I wouldn't have such fancies, if I were you. You know better. Don't give me any Aladdin's lamp nonsense. I am here for business, you know."

"To be sure. Miss Lloyd is—is—is all right. Lend the rest of my estate to my son, Stephen. The boy is a fool, but he might as well have the spending of the dollars as the lawyers. I am sensible enough now, Phillips. I want a will made that a lawyer cannot pick.

JESSIE'S AMBITION

They pick wills as other scamps pick pockets—that is about the truth of it."

"I think we had better delay the subject, sir. I doubt whether you are in a legal condition."

"Hang the condition! Lend Steve the money, eight per cent., the interest to be invested in lighting or water companies; principal to be loaned to Steve's children and grandchildren. Great Scott! What an idea! I shall own the gold, if I am dust. The land and the houses will be in my name for generations. The gold will grow beyond counting; the land will become gold. It is a great scheme! A tremendous scheme! And I can think it all out, though Anson does talk as if my brain was—degenerate. That is the word, is n't it? Thanks to that doctor who taught us such a convenient term—it is a little more respectful than saying a man is mad, but it means the same thing, I fear."

"Mr. Lloyd, let me call a carriage and take you home. Then I will make the will as you wish it made."

"All secure—a loan, mind—nothing but a loan—and eight per cent. Lend it to Steve—he is a fool—but a good boy—stood up for his father, and spoke out like a man at that beggarly meeting. He didn't howl with the wolves, not he! Lend the gold to my son,

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Stephen Lloyd, and his heirs. Make all tight and secure."

"Lloyd, you know me; tight as a trivet. Come, I want to go to your house; you may as well go with me."

And thus the rich man went that morning out of his money-making den for ever. The place that had known him so potent and so worldly-wise was to know him no more. But at the last moment he did not think of this possibility. He called a clerk, gave him some orders, locked his desk, and with his mind full of this new idea of loaning his wealth to his descendants, shut the door of his office against himself, and went away without turning one glance backward. He never more entered the room where he had ruled so absolutely; for, as he left its threshold, he put his feet into those waste dominions of the blasted intellect where men sit brooding on their unprofitable gold, in the hell of their own making. For greed of gold as surely ruins the mental powers as sensuality ruins the moral nature.

As they rode homeward, the sick man began to realise his condition. He felt as if he had suddenly been cut off from the busy, happy world around him. The physician's words returned, as if newly spoken, and his heart was sick with terror. A dismal, sullen stillness suc-

JESSIE'S AMBITION

ceeded to his noisy excitement, and he entered his home with a sultry thunderstorm in all his veins. His wife met him at the door. She opened her arms and folded him in them, and her cool, sweet presence was like a breath of heaven. For a moment he would not answer her love and pity; then the thought of his desolate condition terrified him, and he said, "Marian! Marian! I am come back to you. I am going to die. Do not send me away from you and from my home."

"I will never leave you, Nicholas. I will stay at your side until the very end."

"Whatever the end may be?"

"Whatever it may be. Steve will help me. Alice will help me. You shall never be left to strangers; never!" and she put his arm through her arm and comforted him with her tender eyes and words as they went apart together.

For the worst was now known and acknowledged, and she could stay by his side, and do whatever love might do for him. He had treated her for years with that brutality which is always polite but which makes a woman shudder; but at this hour she put all such memories away, and only remembered that she had once loved him and believed in his love, and that she had vowed to stand by him in sickness and health until death should part them.

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CHAPTER X

A GREAT VICTORY

THESE events were made known to Jessie through the newspapers, and they added greatly to the importance she assumed at the fashionable New Jersey watering-place where she was "leading" society to her heart's ambition. So much she had obtained from Steve's love and generosity, but on the subject of Newport he had been immovable as a rock. In some way, the particulars of which she did not inquire into, he had found the necessary funds for her elaborate dressing and entertainment; he had seen her established in pretty rooms facing the noble beach, and he had then frankly told her "not to expect any visits from him." He said "he was going on a long solitary tramp, far from every one he knew, and he hoped in September they might be as glad to meet as they were then to part."

Jessie vowed such words were cruel and unjust, and she did her best in the last hours they were together to draw tighter the bonds that Steve seemed so glad to break away from.

A GREAT VICTORY

And the man still loved her. It was easy yet for her to make him forget all but her beauty and brightness, for the strange strong mystery which binds man and wife together is not easily broken. He left her finally with an ache in his heart and tears in his eyes; she watched his tall figure and long swinging stride until he had passed out of her sight.

Then she turned to the new delights surrounding her. She was resolved to taste them in all the fulness which had been her dream during those years when she had been tormented with large desires and means that did not go half their length. Her toilets were in themselves commanding; besides, she had "the air" which carries a good toilet beyond itself. In a few days she became the undisputed leader of the small but fashionable colony of women filling the closet-like rooms of the great hotel and making its broad piazzas aflame with moving colour and brilliant life.

It was to Mrs. Stephen Lloyd that all questions pertaining to the frivolous life in which she moved were referred. The host consulted her about entertainments, the ladies about dress and social matters, and her fiat was felt to be final and satisfactory. With this power she put on a more radiant beauty and that kind of amiability which is the result of fulfilled wishes.

2000



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Also, she developed a reckless extravagance in costumes, and all the pretty addendas to costumes.

"Steve will scold, and then find the money to pay for them," she reflected, "and I can afford to buy the summer's éclat with a morning's ill temper at the end of it." So foolishly did this selfish woman rate love — a few weeks' glitter and show and flattery to be paid for by the wounding and wronging of the good heart that trusted in her.

The sudden departure of the Lloyds from Newport had to be accounted for, and as soon as Mr. Lloyd's collapse was known every reporter understood the consequences to Miss Lloyd and Lord Medway. Each and all commented on it in their own way, and where leading facts were unknown, did not scruple to invent them. Jessie was equally unprincipled.

She pitied "poor Alice" with sighs and shrugs, and intimated that this result was precisely what she had always expected. She had met Lord Medway at the beginning of the affair, and — well, it was better to say nothing about it. But the soft, dreamy smile on her face and the irrepressible sigh suggested any amount of friendship between Medway and herself that her listeners chose to imagine. And of course there were imaginations vivid enough to weave

A GREAT VICTORY

numberless pretty romances out of the unspoken materials, so that the general impression was that Jessie ought to have been Lady Medway, and would have been but for her sister-in-law's superior financial attractions.

All this personal and relative gossip gave her additional influence, and she increased it by a run up to New York City to "see poor Alice." This visit happened to be on a morning when it was particularly unwelcome. Mr. Lloyd had just suffered an attack of paralysis, and the house was so full of gloomy despair that Jessie's bright gown and fluttering ribbons appeared to mock in its atmosphere. Alice received her, however, with the most perfect courtesy. She excused her mother and asked when Jessie had last heard from Steve. "We are very anxious for his presence," she said sadly. "He is much needed now, and we fully expected he would have been at his father's side ere this."

"Indeed," answered Jessie with a little laugh, "I don't suppose Steve has an idea of his father's serious illness. He is off to the mountains, but I have not the slightest notion what mountains. After bidding me good-bye, he said he did not intend to read a newspaper or write a letter, or even accept a letter until he came back in September. Of course it is very disagreeable for me."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"I should think so. Are you not very anxious?"

"No. Steve can take care of himself, but it is annoying when you are in a large hotel to know that people are wondering if you have a husband, and if so, where on the earth he is."

"Yes," answered Alice, and then there was silence, and Alice's eyes looked afar off, as if seeking her brother; and after a pause she sighed and said softly, "Poor Steve!"

"I came to ask if there is anything I can do," said Jessie. "If you would like me to look after the house affairs, or write letters, or see inquirers, you know there are a score of unusual obligations in a time of this kind."

"No, thank you. You are very thoughtful, but all such obligations are provided for."

"I am so sorry about the interruption to your marriage. It was fixed for October, was it not?"

"There is no time fixed now. How could I think of marriage with my father dying upstairs?"

"I did not suppose it possible. Still, you must feel the disappointment."

"I am not different from other women."

"Will Lord Medway remain in America?"

"He will doubtless be governed by circum-

A GREAT VICTORY

stances. We all are. Will you take lunch? I see it is ready."

"Thanks. I am hungry. Have you seen my brother John lately?"

"No. His engagement with Mr. Lloyd terminated some weeks ago."

"I am sure I don't know what is the matter with John. He hardly ever comes to see me now. He goes to see Flora. Flora has a baby girl, and —"

"Flora?"

"My sister Flora."

"Oh!"

Then there was a cool silence and a very dull lunch. Alice was naturally depressed, and Jessie was tempted to make remarks about her position which were more foolish than really unkind. "I shall have to hurry back," she said with a consequential air. "There is an entertainment to-night, and every one looks to me in some way or other. But I am sure I shall not feel equal to much dressing to-night. And yet dressing is expected of one. Still, when I think of Mr. Lloyd and you —"

"Pray do not permit our sorrows to interfere. If there are entertainments there must be toilets, of course. I do wish you knew anything about my brother Steve."

"Steve is having what he calls 'a good time.'

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

He is awfully selfish about it, I must say. He can't bear any one to know where he is. It is peculiarly embarrassing to me."

"And to us at present. Father has asked for him several times lately. He ought to be here."

Beyond this point neither woman seemed able to get. Attempts to eat and attempts to talk all fell flat and hopeless, and Jessie finally rose, shook out her fluttering skirts impatiently, and said she must go, as she had a train to catch. She was not asked to repeat her visit, and she thought of that omission as she rode back to the hotel, and mentally vowed that if Steve went home at this time she would go also.

"That is certain," she said decidedly. "I don't mean to be put down by Alice's cool ways. Any other girl would have talked about her marriage. She is as peculiar as Steve; a queer lot altogether." Then she remembered her own family, and felt sorry for a moment that she had not visited them. "Mother would have been so glad to see me," she thought. "I wish she lived higher up-town. St. Mark's Place is out of the world now."

That night Jessie considered it decorous to dress with a dark splendour that was very becoming to her. She declined to dance, and her face wore the expression of one who has seen a great sorrow and is full of the sympathetic re-

A GREAT VICTORY

membrance of it. All these circumstances gave a certain Mr. Belton a good excuse for lingering at her side, in order to give her what comfort he could by talking over the sad family events. He had known Nicholas Lloyd well, and he was not averse to speaking his mind plainly about the financier.

"I see that his affairs are in the hands of Phillips & Co. for settlement, and that they have advertised for your husband, madam. Upon my word, a strange thing! An incomprehensible thing!"

"But why? I think it very natural."

"First, that he should ever be able to leave your side. Second, that you at least should not know where he has gone to."

She was a little offended at this doubt of her influence over Steve, and she answered sharply: "If I had insisted on knowing, my husband would have told me. But I am quite aware that his chief desire is to get free of every human claim. My husband is not like other men; his nature is too large to respond all the time to mere humanity. He wants the companionship of the sea and the woods. I see you do not understand."

"Do you?"

"Not always. I only feel that Stephen Lloyd is somehow far better than I am."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"There is no one better, or cleverer, or lovelier than yourself in the wild world, and the man is a fool who cannot see that."

He said these words with the force and intent of a man with an object before him, and Jessie knew well what it was. She did not say a word in answer, but with eyes downcast sat still as death for a moment or two. Then she rose, and with an air of offence went to a party of ladies at the other end of the room.

But she had listened. The words, veiled as they were, had sunk into her heart, and Belton smiled as he watched her departure. "I shall get the word 'divorce' out some day soon," he thought. "And by my soul, that woman ought to have a husband that knows how to value her—myself, for example—a scamp like Steve Lloyd ought to be easily got rid of—I wonder if she loves him. Some one told me she was a poor girl—married him for money likely—if so, she will unmarry for more money;" and he strolled into the moonlit grounds, lit a cigar, and thought it all over and out.

Jessie, in her way, acted very much like him. She chatted a few minutes with her acquaintances, complained of feeling sad and weary, and declared the whole day had been so trying she could not endure the noise and light of company

A GREAT VICTORY

any longer. She thought she had fully covered her retreat by these words, and could go to her room without exciting any feeling but one of admiration for her sympathetic heart. And yet these were the remarks that at a discreet distance followed her exit.

"Mr. Belton was at her side all the evening."

"I saw him there."

"He has just gone into the grounds."

"She has gone to her room."

"Has there been a quarrel? Or—"

"She is much too prudent."

"Who knows? She is so vain."

"And so undeniably beautiful. I never saw her look so handsome."

For a moment or two Jessie had the same thought. She turned the lights fully on and looked steadily at herself ere she removed a single ornament. As she did so she recalled the almost angry admiration of Mr. Belton, and a crimson blush rushed over her fair neck and reddened the alluring pallor of her white cheeks and brow. "Why did I listen?" she asked herself. "I have given him no right to speak to me in such terms—I will certainly have no more to say to him—yet his admiration gives me éclat and I mean no wrong; I would n't wrong Steve by a single thought; Steve ought to be notified of his father's condition; I dare

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

say Mr. Belton will understand the best way to trace him, and I may as well use the man. If I drop him altogether, women are so ill-natured they will be sure to suppose this and that and the other; and it is a fact that a man has come too near a good woman when he dares to say what she ought not to listen to. I cannot give a crowd of gossipers such an opportunity; no, I can't do it for Steve's sake as well as my own. As for Paul Belton, I rather think I can keep him in his proper place."

If a moth reasons about a candle flame it is probably in much the same manner; and if an original basis of clamouring selfishness be allowed, almost any disguise, even that of extreme virtue, will be assumed to compass its ends. Yet Jessie had been too well brought up not to know that she was on dangerous ground. Two things had happened that day which she could not misunderstand — Alice's refusal to accept her offer of assistance, and Mr. Belton's avowal of undisguised admiration. In her heart she felt the one to be as condemnatory as the other. She knew as well as Alice knew that she was incapable of leaving the gay attractions of her hotel life for the gloomy surroundings of a house in which Death sat watching a dying man. And she knew as well as Alice knew that there must be something wrong in the conditions

A GREAT VICTORY

between Steve and herself, or he could not have so completely severed the tie between them, though it was only for a few weeks.

But the conviction of her faults brought no regret with it. If her conscience troubled her, she virtually said to it, "Let my sins alone." I am not disposed to repent of them at present. She had no desire to change the gay piazza for the death-room, no special wish even for Steve's presence at that time, since his return would mean her own return to the narrow bounds of the despised flat, which had once been so beautiful in her eyes. Alas! the very sweetest and truest of mortal love is insufficient to lift the earthy woman above earth. It needs the fire of Almighty God to warm the cold, selfish instincts of a worldly nature into the glow of sacrifice and the ideality of love.

In the mean time, nothing could be more lonely and sorrowful than the Lloyd mansion on the avenue. The outside of a house has often as much expression as a human face, and there was a positive air of trouble about it. For humanity does impress itself on mere wood and stone, does impregnate the rooms of a house with its own spiritual emanations, and there are undoubtedly dwellings so tainted by the sins and sorrows which they have witnessed, that they are virtually haunted by presences created in them.

20



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Yea, there are rooms in houses which we should tremble to enter, if we knew the tragedies that still cling to their walls and frequent their void places.

In the large upper chambers of this splendid dwelling such a mortal tragedy was being lived out as could not be confined within its walls. Its mournful effluences drifted down the great stairways and filled the beautiful parlours and looked out of the half-closed windows, compelling the passer-by to a wondering, half-frightened glance which he could not understand and so put quickly away. For here the rich Nicholas Lloyd had come to die. Here he sat, waiting for the hour of fate. In his brain—that wondrous world with one inhabitant—he lived in profound and awful depths, where things vague and fearful were half revealed and half hidden by mist of dreams. Led by old desires and ancient hates, tormented by the sins of vanished years, and pushed by hands that were dust long ago, into recesses dim and dark through treacherous sands and storms of flame, he suffered even in this life the awful penalty of the “outer darkness.”

It was now that the long neglected wife came grandly up to the far back promise of her love. All that gives life its meaning and earnestness, and death its solemn and mysterious signifi-

A GREAT VICTORY

cance, moved her to superhuman cares and faith. Her soul stretched itself out to a transcendent credence in the love of God. She dared to believe that all things, even the salvation of one so unconscious of his own danger, were possible to Omnipotence. And since he could not pray, she prayed for him. Night and day ministering to his bodily necessities, she cried out incessantly, “God be merciful to him.” Faith crushed down every creed but that grandly surpassing assurance that “He was not willing that any should perish.” Then why should she limit this glorious zone of the divine mercy? So whenever her husband would or could listen, the ineffable name was on her lips.

He heard it silently or tremblingly, looking at her with eyes so wide and pitiful that their gaze nearly broke her heart. / Oh, was it possible that the thought of God could enter the brain demented and corrupted by the lust of gold? / She knew not, but she believed that prayer was omnipotent. / There might be one sane, clean moment granted in the which he could say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” / And if so, surely he could not have been more sinful than Christ was holy. / When a man was fighting death and hell, then, if ever, a loving wife must pray for him. / And no apparent use-



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

lessness made her cease from prayer. She knew her husband must die. Medical science has felt its way only too surely. When it says "There is no hope," there is none. But faith for the soul's salvation will not so despair. It spurns impossibilities; it relies upon the unseen and the unknowable.

Into this valley of the shadow of death Alice Lloyd also passed, and its gloom, and suffering, and despair were all the more noticeable because she left for it the very sunshine of life's gayest verities and sweetest hopes. No one willingly takes this narrowest and darkest of roads; and Alice wept secretly as she inclined her heart and head and whispered obedience to the circumstances she could neither avoid nor control. She hoped her lover would at least frequently step aside and comfort her loneliness, and bring renewed promise to her disappointment. And at first it seemed as if her hopes would be realised. Within two days after her return to New York, Lord Medway called at the afflicted house. Alice was delightedly surprised; and Medway must have seen the transfiguration of love and hope on her face when he entered her presence unexpectedly. Adorably shy and self-conscious, she retreated behind her book as behind a barrier, but the young man was so especially

A GREAT VICTORY

tender and sympathetic that she was easily led to respond to the comfort he offered.

Never had she appeared to him more lovely and desirable, yet he did not understand that what delighted him that day in her visible beauty was the invisible,—the spiritual evolution of accepted sorrow illumining the physical evolution, for the face is always the very portrait of the soul. Half reluctantly at first, afterward with great apparent desire and sincerity, he urged their immediate marriage. He said, "As to the business part of their union, what was yet unfinished, he could trust to her if she could trust to him;" and he appeared to be altogether so unselfish and affectionate that Alice gladly believed in all he said. At that hour she almost loved him. He won from her by his faithfulness in sorrow far more than he had ever gained in the sunny hours of so-called pleasure. Then, she had been coy and hard to please and chary of her lightest favour; but at this dark hour his fidelity awoke in her heart that overplus of womanly gratitude which is so near akin to love that Medway was charmed by its delicious sweetness, and he went through the shadowed hall and down the steps of the sorrowful house a very happy man.

"How sweet and good she is!" he whispered to himself as he drove through the avenue.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"All her affections are like the dews on roses, fair as the flowers themselves, as sweet and gentle!" And then he smiled pleasantly at his own remembrance of the apt classical quotation. And surely at that moment his heart was true to his promise; he had no intention of breaking his renewed vow; he was fully determined to make Alice his wife with the least possible delay. And Alice had promised to consult her mother at once, and the next morning name the day for their marriage.

"I will be here to-morrow at the noon hour," he said with a loving caress, and she held his hand for a moment and looked into his eyes, and felt sure that she had bade him "farewell" for ever. For so pitilessly kind is that prescience which accompanies the pure in heart, that even with this engagement in her ears Alice trembled in the gloom of its certain failure. Not that Lord Medway intended this result,—even Alice, with a severe justice, exonerated him so far,—but weak men are easily cruel through their selfishness, though they may not, as a rule, plan cruelty.

Medway, however, went directly from Alice to his lawyer's office, and he was frightened by the doubts and cautions he received there. This man had never favoured his client's marriage with Nicholas Lloyd's daughter. He detested

A GREAT VICTORY

Lloyd, who had done him some wrong in the far distant years of his early struggle for business, and throughout the whole negotiation he had quietly striven to delay and embarrass affairs. Indeed, his provoking contradictions and suspicions had been a large factor in developing the disease which had driven his old enemy to the chamber of death. He felt that this was the final struggle, and he put forth all his powers to such excellent purpose that he induced the young man to leave early the next morning for England. To the last moment he remained with him, and Medway, uncertain and perplexed, and completely under the influence of a man of tremendous resource and mental activity, went aboard the steamer unresolved, and miserably conscious that he was a consummate scoundrel.

"I will see the young lady," were the man's last words, as he held Medway's hand, "and make it all right. She is Nicholas Lloyd's daughter, and bound to be a sensible girl."

"I don't know, Mr. Rives; it seems to me all shamefully wrong, I declare it does. I think I will go on shore again."

"You must not. I will tell her you had a cablegram about important business. Take my advice and drop the whole affair. Have I any motive but your advantage? As far as I am

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12



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

concerned, it would be better for me that you should marry the girl."

"Then why do you fight against your advantage?"

"I have been young. I made a mistake myself. I won't see any fine young man get into a hole if I can help it. Lawyers are not altogether Sancho Panzas; there is something of Don Quixote in most of us. It is the last moment. Good-bye."

"But Mr. Rives —"

"Good-bye! I will see Miss Lloyd before noon. Write to her at your leisure." He said these words on the loosened gangway, and as the great ship began to move, he called out, "Don't write at all. Let the matter drop entirely." Then as a parting shot: "I am ready to take up the Leavenworth affair as soon as you are."

Answer to this remark was impossible, but he noticed Medway laugh and lift his hat, and he said with a sigh of relief, "He is safe now." Then he put his hands in his pockets and walked thoughtfully to his coupé. It was too soon to call on Miss Lloyd, so he drove to the Hoffman House, ate a good breakfast, smoked a couple of cigars, and then resolved to get the business off his hands—as far as the young lady was concerned. He was fully conscious of the re-

A GREAT VICTORY

vengeful part he had played, and it was with a sense of well-deserved triumph he entered the house which he told himself he had "helped considerably to pull down."

The parlour of the Lloyd mansion was darkened to keep out the heat. The house was very still. Mr. Rives had to wait twenty minutes before Alice was ready to see him, and in that twenty minutes thoughts that he could not prevent crowded even gratified revenge to the wall. Since Nicholas Lloyd so wantonly wronged him a great tide of events had flowed between them, and the straits of Time widened and widened; but he had never forgotten the wrong, never ceased to watch for an opportunity to repay it, with interest. The opportunity had come, and he had taken every advantage of it. In a few minutes he would taste the sweetest morsel of his revenge, for he resolved to tell Miss Lloyd the story of the far-back injury, and leave her no grounds for doubting who it was that had come between her and Lord Medway.

When Alice entered the room he saw at once that she had been weeping, but it did not move him to pity, for his anger, ingrained, had become a hatred which desired its satisfaction, even upon the innocent. And if his injustice touched him at all, he reminded himself that his

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

own daughter's prospects had been blighted just on the verge of her womanhood by the sudden poverty which Nicholas Lloyd had brought on him. "'T is but justice, bare justice," he muttered; "my girl suffered the wreck of all her hopes; his girl shall suffer as mine did. Yes, I will spare her nothing."

As he was thus instructing himself, Alice entered. She was dressed in white, even to her shoes; and as she stood in the dim room, she made a kind of radiance. He was startled by her pallor, by her air of noble sorrow, and by her large proud eyes, which affected him like an accusation.

"You are Mr. Rives?" she asked, advancing a little, but declining, by a slight motion, the chair he offered.

"I am. I called to tell you that Lord Medway left for England this morning."

"I know it, sir."

"Ah!" he ejaculated. He could only imagine that Medway, in spite of his advice to the contrary, had written to her, and he was slightly dashed by this unconscious throwing back of his first stone. But he continued with more animus,—

"I do not know when he will return."

"He will not return at all."

Irritated by this calm, positive assertion, he

A GREAT VICTORY

denied at once its truth. "He will return about Christmas, I think."

"You are mistaken, sir. He will not return."

"How do you know that?" he asked sharply. And she made no answer, for how could she tell him that he saw only with his eyes, but that she saw with her heart?

The profound silence that ensued was most embarrassing, though it lasted but a minute. Indeed, he forced with brutal directness a passage through it. "Mr. Lloyd is very ill, I suppose?"

"Very; he dies daily, by hours and minutes."

"Is he ever sufficiently sane to remember past events?"

"Sometimes he is. Do you wish me to ask him for some information?"

"Yes. I wish you to ask him to remember the twelfth of October, twenty-three years ago. On that day he robbed me of all I had, and in so doing blasted my little Annette's prospects for life. By fraud and falsities he has heaped damnation on himself before God has damned him, and I hope he will go to the devil when that day comes around again!"

He spoke with a rapid passion that admitted of no interruption, even if Alice had desired to interrupt him; but she stood still and white as death, looking at the accuser. Very soon,

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

however, her calm, stern voice broke the unnatural stillness that instantly followed the unnatural outbreak.

"God has brought his sins to his remembrance. My father does not require that you or I should touch his memory. It would be well to pray that our sins be not so brought to remembrance. As to the future, Nicholas Lloyd has to do with Almighty God, and not with John Rives."

Her grave rebuke, severe in youthful beauty, had an invincible authority. He was ashamed of his profane, relentless cruelty, and he added, "If you only knew how cruelly he wronged me!"

"The reconciling grave is now between you. In a few weeks, or days, or hours, it may be too late to send the message you ought to send; for you must remember that your trespasses will be forgiven as you forgive those that have trespassed against you."

"If you only knew!" he reiterated; "if you only knew, you would not wonder that I hate."

"I am sorry for you. Hatred is such a bitter self-punishment. And very likely you judge my poor father too hardly. If he had committed any crime against his fellow-men the law —"

"He never committed a crime; he was too clever for that; but he did far worse to me."

A GREAT VICTORY

"Well, then you have seen your desire on your enemy, as all those who suffer ultimately do. This is your opportunity. Forgive any wrong father has done you. If I ask him to remember John Rives, I must give him a merciful reason for doing so. What am I to say to him?"

"I cannot forgive him. Let him go to — his own place."

"You also may need mercy some day, Mr. Rives. Is this the answer you wish to your prayer for it?"

"I cannot forgive Nicholas Lloyd; but I am sorry that I have so steadily worked against your marriage with Lord Medway. I regret that. I will try to undo it."

"You need not regret it, as far as I am concerned. All things will work together for my good, for I trust in One able to make them do so. Do not, therefore, try either to do or to undo in my affairs. I have committed my cause to God, and not to John Rives. But if you have the message of a Christian gentleman to send to my dying father, I will gladly take it."

She ceased speaking, and stood waiting, and the stillness was such as might be felt. The roll of the carriages outside the darkened windows only intensified it. Alice heard them as in a dream. John Rives heard nothing but the

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

rapid beat, beat, beat of his heart, where anger and hatred remained as in a fort. But suddenly his sullen defiance heard a Voice, prophetic in its power, kingly in its authority, priestly in its blessing and cursing — the Voice of Conscience, of the pervading and besetting God — "Thou also art a mortal man." And he recognised the majesty of this reminder, and did reverence to that within him which is eternal.

"You may — tell — Nicholas Lloyd that — I forgive him," he said. The words were brokenly and softly spoken. Indeed, he hardly knew the tones of his own voice, and he was far down the avenue ere he understood fully that he had obeyed that wondrous Power which works neither by insinuation, flattery, nor threat, but by simply holding up the naked law of God within the soul — that Imperative which says to every man, if he will listen to it, "Thou ought" and "Thou must."

He did not look at Alice as he passed her, nor see the brightening paleness of her face, nor comprehend that he had been with one of those finer spirits who amid the jar and jangle of daily life and the sighs and cries of suffering still keep the melodious memory of the everlasting chime. But Alice knew that she had been on a great battle-field, and witnessed a great victory, and that henceforward that shrouded

A GREAT VICTORY

parlour must be a sacred place, for in it she had seen a sinful soul meet its Maker and render obedience.

"Surely," she whispered, "he has gone to his house justified. It is good for him and it is good for father. Poor father! When a man is fighting death it would be foul play indeed to let flesh and blood interpose against him."

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CHAPTER XI

STEVE IS WANTED

STEVE was as yet ignorant of these events. After leaving his wife at the watering-place she had chosen, he went straight to a little cot he knew of in the heart of the Hudson Highlands. It was the home of a wood-cutter and his wife, and there were no other homes near it. The old woman had cared for him before; the old man had the virtue of extreme reticence. Neither of them troubled themselves about Steve's coming and going; he gave them money, they gave food and shelter for it, and asked him no questions. Steve was never sure whether their apparent apathy was indifference, or stupidity, or a fine sense of personal peculiarities with which they had nothing to do.

Towards the end of August he was sitting one night on the doorstep of the cottage. The wood-cutter was in a chair tilted against a big maple tree, and was smoking one of Steve's cigars, — an act of politeness he very seldom committed, for he much preferred his own old pipe and black tobacco. They had nodded

STEVE IS WANTED

to each other when they met at the supper-table; they had nodded again when the cigar was offered and accepted, but they had not spoken. Neither of them wished to do so. They were content to wait until they had something to say. Cynthia, the woodman's wife, was scarcely more talkative. Her vocabulary consisted of a few questions and a few exclamations. She had said to Steve when he returned from a day in the woods, "Be you come home to supper?" and then put an extra plate on the table. She was now moving quietly about her cottage, washing the dishes and laying the table for the early breakfast.

A great peace was all around. The sun had just set, the robins were piping the birds to bed, the woodman's collies sleeping at Steve's feet. They always attached themselves to Steve when he visited their master, for the collie is a gentleman and knows a gentleman when he meets one. Like Steve, they abhorred evil and deceit, and they meant whatever they suggested. One dog rested his head on Steve's foot; Steve's hand lay across the head of the other. The stars came out one by one, "keen glancing from the Immensities," the selfsame stars under which Abraham worshipped and David kept his sheep and Columbus sailed, — Arcturus pale and calm as angelic stars should be; the

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Pleiades with their "sweet influence," and the Belt of Orion with his "binding" one. Plants and trees and rivers and stars all spoke of incalculable beneficence to Steve, and made the earth on which he trod consecrated ground. Was he lonely then? No! the loneliness of a good or great soul is all nonsense! It has infinite relationships.

Yet when Cynthia had gone to bed and there were no longer the echoes of the sounds her movements made, Steve looked at his companion as if he wished him to speak. He knew what to expect from him in the way of conversation,—short, sharp sentences like pistol shots, and he felt as if one or two of them would not be amiss.

"Martin Bloch," he said, "I know that I seem to you a queer fellow. You wonder at me?"

"I wonder at nothing."

"I mean, at the idle life I lead. But don't you think every man ought to get as much happiness as possible in his own way?"

"Is 'happiness' all life means?"

"We can only live once."

"You have n't read your Bible, Steve. That's clear."

"I mean we only live this particular life once."

STEVE IS WANTED

"Would you like to live this particular life twice?"

"No. It is too full of injustice."

"That's it. I see Wilmot has lost his case again."

"Yet it was a good one."

"The case is bad when the client is poor."

"Don't you think a poor man can obtain a decree against a rich man?"

"As the Bible says: 'with man it is impossible, but all things are possible to God.'"

After a long pause Steve continued: "You never spoke of your politics? What side are you for?"

"The side that's up."

"How is that right?"

"Well, it's natural to think that Providence knows best."

"I have been disappointed in X."

"You should n't have been."

"Why not?"

"Because ten never becomes twelve."

"His idea of the whole world is a political one."

"That's it. Men to him aint fathers and citizens, they are Republicans or Democrats."

"I have often wondered, Martin, if you were born in these woods, and to this life?"

"I was not."



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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"You met calamity? And bravely, too, I have no doubt?"

"Yes, as a good soldier meets a shot."

"You had a loving wife to help you?"

"Yes, I had."

"And health? Health is good fortune."

"It's the salt of life."

"And you don't fear death?"

"The fear of death may bully the world; it does not bully me."

"You have a reason for that confidence?"

"Yes. I know Him 'that was dead, and is alive, and living for ever.'"

Then Steve stretched out his hand, and Martin shyly took it, and the silence was deeper than ever. An hour passed, then Steve rose, stooped and petted the dogs, and said with a yawn, "It is getting late, Martin, and you go to work so early in the morning."

"Not to-morrow. The job I was on is finished."

"Some day you will finish your last job."

"That's it. It won't matter."

"You think so?"

"Not to others. We are in a world where there's always plenty of fresh hands."

"That's true, too. Good night. I am going to sleep."

"I doubt it."

STEVE IS WANTED

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"Flesh and blood may sleep, but does the soul sleep?"

"No. Sleep sets it free like a bird from a cage."

"I thought so."

But Steve did not hear this answer, for as Martin spoke, a clear, soft, penetrating voice filled his ears and his heart. He stood still, and his whole frame vibrated to the powerful influence. Awed, and yet informed of his duty, he bowed his head and his will to the message. It was imparted swiftly as thought, and yet it brought with it a strange conviction of imperative necessity. He waited until he knew the presence had departed, and then he said, —

"Martin, did you hear anyone speak?"

"Not a word."

"I did. I shall not go to bed now. I am going home. My mother called me. She is needing my help in some way."

"Then go to her. Don't loiter. She may be in trouble."

"I fear she is."

"And it may be about yourself. Men shouldn't make mothers weep. God counts their tears."

In ten minutes Steve had packed the little valise he carried, and was on his way to the

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

nearest railway station. But it was long after midnight before he was at the door of the Lloyd mansion in New York. He had debated with himself on the journey as to whether he would call there, or go at once to Newport, but had concluded that it might be best to see if his father were not in New York. If so, Steve was sure anything unusual would have been telegraphed to him. He was a little astonished to see lights in the house; more so when he rang the bell and it was promptly answered, and the sight of the servant whom he knew had gone with the family to Newport sent a quick terror to his heart.

"You here, Kelly?" he ejaculated, and the man answered, "Mr. Lloyd is very ill, sir. The family are all in New York."

The man preceded him into the parlour, turned up the lights, and then went to notify the mother and sister of Steve's arrival. He was too restless to sit, too sensitive to the atmosphere around him to doubt what presence was waiting there. But full of anxiety as he was he resented this gloomy anticipation of the change which affected the whole house.

"I wonder what we are Christians for?" he mentally exclaimed. "We never see anything but terror in the visit of death. The pagan Athenian, caressing his dog ere he cheerfully

STEVE IS WANTED

went out and 'fared to the house of the Lord of Many Guests,' might teach us a lesson. There is no fear of the terrible in his face or attitude. He knows that all good things await the new-comer to Hades, and that 'Happiness is betrothed to him in a garden of myrtles.' Then why should not a Christian take leave of his life and his friends in the same cheerful, hopeful spirit?"

He had not finished this strain of thought when Mrs. Lloyd and Alice came into the room together. He was shocked at the change in their appearance, and when he heard something of the great burden they were bearing he felt a burning shame and anger at his own careless neglect. "I ought to have known that father was not fit to leave," he said, "and I did know it, but in my selfish carelessness I hoped things would go on as usual until I had had my holiday."

"You ought at least to have left us some idea of where to find you, Steve, in case of serious trouble. I thought my heart would break to-night, with the very longing for the comfort and help you could be. If prayer could have reached your ear, as well as the ear of God, you would, you must, have heard my cry."

"I did hear it, and I answered it at once. I will not leave you again, mother."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Your father's sickness may be tedious, or it may end suddenly — and there is Jessie."

"Jessie is very happy. I have not the slightest doubt of that."

"But you must go to her," said Mrs. Lloyd. "She ought to know that you are here. She must be anxious about you."

"She does not expect me, mother, until September," replied Steve. "I do not think she will care to have her visit shortened, or made less brilliant by a knowledge of our trouble."

"She knows everything already," said Alice; "she has been here. And she did offer her help in any possible way. But she could not tell us where you were, and that was the first and great thing we needed."

"Steve," asked Mrs. Lloyd, "are you behaving unkindly to Jessie?"

"Not at all, mother. She understands. She had no objection to being left alone until September."

"Nevertheless, you ought to go to her."

"Then I will go."

At this juncture some food was brought for Steve, and they sat with him as he ate, and talked of their father's sad case, and of Alice's matrimonial affairs, until the clatter of the milk-wagons, and the summer dawn warned them that another day was at hand.

STEVE IS WANTED

Following his mother's advice, Steve went as soon as possible to visit his wife. He did not give her any information of this visit, for he had still some of that boyish love for surprises, which never give the satisfaction the preparer of them anticipates. He reached the hotel just before dinner, and was told that Mrs. Lloyd was out riding. So he sat down on the piazza to watch for her return, and a dark spirit of jealousy began to stir in his breast.

"She knows what trouble we are in," he thought, "and yet she can go galloping over the country with some fool or other." Then he reminded himself that he was blaming her without knowledge, that he knew not who was her escort, that Jessie had often said "to ride horse-back was her great desire," and that he ought not to expect more than a conventional recognition of his father's illness from her; also, that he himself was to blame, since his very willing desertion had left her dependent for courtesy and escort upon strangers.

In spite of such sensible thoughts, he sat with lowering brows watching for his wife's return home. She lingered till the sun was dropping low, but he finally saw her coming at a rapid speed up the long, smooth road. There was no mistaking the small erect figure, the proud carriage of the head, the dash and daring that

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

were as much a part of her as was the trig fit of her riding-habit and the faultless set of her hat. A gentleman rode at her side, and he had an air of familiarity or right in that position which instantly offended Steve. At this moment he could not take into consideration the fact that he had voluntarily abdicated his place; he only saw another where he ought to have been, and saw that other treated with a merry intimacy which he did not at all enjoy.

As the riders neared the hotel Steve stepped forward, and before Jessie realised who was at her horse's head he was ready to assist her from her saddle.

"O Steve," she cried, "how glad I am to see you!" And the ring of pleasure in her voice was so genuine that Steve's heart rose high as heaven, and he took her in his arms regardless of onlookers, and kissed her. Then she introduced him to Mr. Belton. "He has been so kind to me, Steve," she said. "He has taught me how to ride and how to swim, and I do not know how I should have got through the time but for him."

And Steve lifted his hat and muttered something that might have been "thank you," but which had the tone of a very contrary greeting. Then he took Jessie on his arm and carried her off triumphantly. And as they who have the

STEVE IS WANTED

best of a situation can afford to be magnanimous, Steve was in a reasonable temper and ready to listen with a happy heart to all his wife's witty and pretty explanations and descriptions.

Her dressing amazed and delighted him. He could hardly bear to dash the beauty and spirits of the brilliant little woman he loved by any reference to his father's condition. But as he was hesitating, Jessie herself introduced the subject.

"Your father is very ill indeed, Steve," she said. "Have you heard about his condition?"

"Yes; I have been home."

"Before coming to see me? I don't think that was nice. I do not value your visit now."

"It was after midnight when I reached New York. I was very unhappy about mother, and I could not at that hour get a train out here. So I went home first, and I am glad I did so. I am much needed there. Alice told me you had offered to do anything you could. It was very good of you."

"Yes; I made the offer and got the coldest kind of refusal."

"They are very miserable."

"They are very proud. And I don't care a pin about their pride. I have been having a

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

real good time. Have you enjoyed yourself, Steve?"

"A little. I missed you, Jessie, far more than you can believe. I shall be glad to have you home. When can you be ready?"

"Ready? What for?"

"To go home."

"Do you mean that stuffy little flat when you say 'home'?"

"We have no other home. I shall be a great deal with father. I think from what mother says I ought to be with him every hour except those hours necessary for sleep and rest. It will be such a great comfort to have you at home, Jessie. The very sight of you makes a new man of me."

"Steve, I have told you often that I hate that flat. I will go to a hotel and board rather than go back to it. But if you must stay near your father, then your proper place is your father's house. I am sure it is big enough to spare us a couple of rooms."

Steve looked at her in gloomy amazement. But a few months ago that flat had answered her highest ambition. And he did not like the idea of a hotel. Who had put that alternative into her head? As for taking her to his father's house, he had no right to do so; yet rather than allow her to begin hotel life, he would ask his

STEVE IS WANTED

mother and Alice to agree to Jessie's demand. But these thoughts passed very reluctantly through his mind, and Jessie said sharply:

"You do not seem to have an opinion of your own, Steve. Why don't you say something?"

"I was thinking," he answered. "I wish you would go to our own home, Jessie; for my sake, dear! At any rate go for a little while, at this hard time. Do me this great favour, darling."

"Go to that wretched little flat! In this broiling weather! No, thank you, I won't do any such thing. I wonder how you can ask me to leave this place until the season is over. When it is over I will come back to New York, but I shall live wherever you live. If your father is alive, I suppose it will be in his house. If he is dead, everything, of course, will be different. You will have, whether you like it or not, to take your proper place."

"Jessie, I have often told you that my father's death can make no difference in our income, or in our social position."

"Nonsense, Steve. If he has made an improper will, we must break it."

"I would rather beg my bread than attempt to break my father's will."

"If he has made no will, then we are all right."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"God help me, Jessie! Are you really speculating over my dying father? He has bought his money with his life, and surely he has a right to do as he will with such dear gold."

"We shall see. How do I look, Steve?"

"You are marvellous, Jessie. You are dressed like a picture. Where did you get all these beautiful things?"

"You will find out pretty soon, Steve. But I really had to dress. People even think it strange that I wear no diamonds. Stephen Lloyd's wife and no diamonds seems so absurd to them."

"It would be far more absurd if you did wear diamonds. Will you go home with me to-morrow? Do, Jessie!"

"I won't go back to the city, Steve, until the weather is cooler. Then you can come for me. Nearly every one is going away in two weeks to the mountains. I should like to go somewhere, if possible; but if you wish me, I will then go back home with you."

"To our own home? Thank you, Jessie."

"No, sir. I will not go back to that flat. I have made some very stylish friends here, and I simply could not ask them to call on me in such a place. Your father's house is all right. I will go there."

"Callers there are out of the question,

STEVE IS WANTED

Jessie. I wonder you can think of such a thing."

"I don't think of it, stupid! But my address will be there, that is sufficient; the future can grow from that. Steve, dear, I want a lot of money. I have used up all you left me, and am a good deal in debt. Gracious! I wish I had a million."

"Always money, Jessie! I wish there was n't such a thing. The very thought of it lies on the heart like a great stone, and seals up every good and kind feeling."

"That is all right. The heart ought to be sealed up these days. When are you going back to New York?"

"To-morrow morning. First train."

"Do you wish me to go with you and see your mother and Alice?"

"If you wish — but — but —"

"But what?"

"Nothing."

However, though she went to town, she did not call on Steve's family. She had a lot of shopping to do, and she had thought over affairs, and concluded that the position she wished would be best taken by surprise. If she advanced step by step, Alice was shrewd enough to circumvent her rights. For by constantly assuring herself that she had "rights"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

in the Lloyd home and property, she had come to regard her non-possession as a great personal wrong.

As they rode into town the next morning Steve asked his wife concerning her brother John. "He is in Day & Darling's law office," she answered with an air of injury,—"but he is become a worse crank than ever. 'Of the people, and for the people,' that is his motto, and much good 'the people' will do him. I think he is crazy, or next door to it."

"Then I wish we were all crazy, Jessie. John has a great heart."

"Too great when it goes out to the whole world. He loves so many that he loves nobody. He lectured two weeks ago at the Cooper Union, and said things that made respectable people angry at him. I heard him severely criticised by Mr. Belton and many others, and I was ashamed to acknowledge him as my brother."

"Poor John! Pray what did he say to offend Mr. Belton and many others?"

"He said that if we saw any injustice or cruelty and did not oppose it, we also were positively and actively immoral. Such nonsense! A man who lived up to that rule would be constantly in a fight."

STEVE IS WANTED

"We ought to be in a constant fight against evil. What else did he say?"

"He spoke badly about what he called 'the worthy sort of people,' and said 'they were mostly cowards.'"

Steve laughed heartily, and answered: "This is interesting, Jessie. Why did he call them cowards?"

"He said if they saw a wrong they shut their lips and took their supper and forgot all about it. Or if they read of some great misery they said, 'Poor fellow!' and then went off to the comic opera, or to dance all night at the house of their most respectable friend, forgetting that because of their silence, injustice and fraud and cruelty cut the throats of the poor and the unfortunate at their pleasure."

"Very good, and very true words. How did the people listening like them?"

"The newspapers said John spoke in a blaze of anger and pity, and set the people on fire, but the more 'worthy sort of people,' the very ones whose help he wanted, did not go with him. John is a fool. If he would turn his fine talents to politics, Mr. Belton says, there is no office he might not aspire to,—governor, President, what not! He has the rabble at his heels."

"And if it is the rabble that make governors



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

and presidents, who would be a thing of their making, Jessie?"

"It would be very nice to have a brother President of the United States, no matter who or what made him so. Here we are at Twenty-third Street. You may leave me now, for I have a great many little things to buy."

So Steve left his wife at one of the great dry goods stores, and went to watch in his father's death-room. Jessie was happier than usual. She had discovered that after all she was the dominant key in her husband's life, and that allowing for a certain amount of opposition she would be very likely, in the long run, to get her own way in anything she was determined about. And she was determined never to go back to the narrow life she had left. She had been gradually throwing off the claims of father and mother, brother and sister; all she desired was gold. It might be the price of a soul, it might be the price of love, of domestic happiness, of honour and friendship, but she wanted gold,—gold to push herself to the front of a crowd of frivolous men and women; gold to outdress and outfeast and outdance the multitude at her heels; gold to buy luxury and power and flattery; gold that was to be spent absolutely upon her own indulgence, unsanctified by a single charitable gift. And Steve

STEVE IS WANTED

knew her desire and her intention, and he trembled, because he doubted his own ability to resist the entreaties, the smiles and tears and cleverly sustained pressure that would be brought against him. He had the faculty, however, of letting things drift, and this question of the future was not yet to be decided. But he felt certain that as soon as she wished to do so, Jessie would accomplish the desire of her heart and make herself one of the Lloyd household.

So the thing expected happened, and Mrs. Lloyd and Alice, with the supersensitiveness of good women, rather overdid the concession granted. They were so afraid of not being courteous enough that they resigned something of their own rights, and were so conscious of their own dislike to the intrusion, that they covered it with more than an ample ceremony. The best guest rooms in the house were allotted to Jessie; a carriage was placed at her disposal, and the servants were instructed to give her every attention and obedience.

Jessie was clever enough to make good her own standing; to gradually render herself almost indispensable. She lifted so many little cares, did so much necessary shopping, saw people whom Mrs. Lloyd and Alice did not wish to see, wrote notes of ceremony, etc., etc., and day by day so encroached on every one's duties, that

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

the keys of the Lloyd mansion, figuratively speaking, fell absolutely into her hands. And through all these changes Steve was becoming daily more and more infatuated with his wife's beauty and cleverness, and more and more subject to her influence and control.

It must, however, be admitted that Jessie's rapid accession to power was greatly aided by Alice's careless abrogation of it. The unhappy girl was walking through the Valley of Humiliation, and it is a fact that most of us prefer to take that lowly road without witnesses. After her interview with Mr. Rives she had written a few sad but positive words to Lord Medway, releasing both of them from an engagement that seemed so allied to misfortune and disappointment; and the young man had accepted his "unhappy destiny" without any gainsaying. Across that chapter of her life she had written "finished," and she knew that it was finished. She knew, also, that she had done right; but an approving conscience does not relieve or release from consequences. These have been created, and must be borne; and it is well for us that there is no release from them. Such experiences bring the sweet austerity of sacrifice, and that serenity of submission which is the harvest-song of inward peace. Alice had not yet attained unto this excellent condition, but she was

STEVE IS WANTED

slowly following after it. On the bread of bitterness, she was growing to her full stature; and then one day this thing happened to her.

Another nurse was needed very urgently. Steve could not leave his father; Jessie was out for the day, and Mrs. Lloyd asked Alice to go to a certain address near Chelsea Square. "I have seen the man, and he is very suitable," she said; "and I could write for him, but if you will take the carriage, and drive to his home, we shall have him here some hours earlier."

"I will go at once, mother;" she answered; and she did so. Having finished her errand, she was driving past the Theological Seminary in that locality; and the quaint, vine-covered building, which she had never seen before, arrested her attention. "It is like a corner from some old English cathedral town," she thought; "such a bit of beauty, and rest, and peace, near the river, is simply wonderful." And as she gazed, she saw several men and women, with prayer-books in their hands, enter the building. Her message was delivered, her curiosity was aroused; nay, it was something wiser and more potent than mere curiosity; it was that warm impression of the soul to which we give the name of presentiment that whispered to her, "Go in and be comforted."

She bade the coachman wait for her, and fol-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

lowed the "two's and three's" through the gateway into a lovely little chapel. The organ was preluding the service in a nobly majestic invocation, and ere it was finished a large orderly body of young men filed into the stalls and knelt in prayer. The little congregation bowed with them, then came the officiating pastor, and his sweet, clear voice filled the whole space with those pathetic entreaties with which sinful men best approach their Maker:—

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; though we have rebelled against him.

"O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Music and intercession, the thrilling march of young men singing, "The Lord is a man of war," the pathos, and the calm assurance of the responses, the verbal music of the pastor's noble reading of the noblest words in the language,—all these went to Alice's heart, and

STEVE IS WANTED

melted its frost with infinite tenderness, and watered it with the rain of sorrowful tears, and filled it with the joy of believing.

"My dear Lord God!" she prayed, "take me to the rest of *Thy Will be Done!*" Then she was comforted. She rose with the congregation, and the sweet music of the benediction fell upon her heart. She had accepted, and she had been accepted; and she went back to her home literally a changed woman. God had spoken a word to her. Is any one ever the same after that wondrous experience?

Who that one moment hath the least descried Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers, that are not, and that are?

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CHAPTER XII

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

THE experience which does not make us better, makes us worse; and there was in Jessie's case a constant disintegration of character. She had obtained the uttermost desire of her vain, ambitious heart; and she considered this result to be the fruit of her own tact and superior wisdom. No credit was given to the force of circumstances; none to her husband's love; none to the unselfish tolerance of Mrs. Lloyd and Alice. She believed that she had forced the position, and she prided herself on her strategy and sagacity.

All the long, dreary winter she held firmly the reins of the Lloyd household, and she was never weary of pointing out to Steve how cleverly she did so. And as Steve was not accustomed to look below the surface of events, he was amazed and delighted with Jessie's social success. He even began to have some respect for a society that was capable of appreciating and indorsing his idea of a beautiful woman and a desirable wife. Yet Jessie, after all, ruled

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

only because of favourable circumstances. Mrs. Lloyd's exhausting watch by her husband's side left her no time for either domestic or social duties, and Alice bore this burden in a large measure with her.

Besides which, Alice had trouble which was peculiarly her own. Soon after Christmas there began to be reports of a marriage between Miss Leavenworth and Lord Medway. Some papers averred this to be the case, and others as positively asserted that the engagement between Miss Lloyd and Lord Medway was still in force, and the marriage only delayed by the illness of the bride's father. Reporters vexed her by requests for an interview, callers and acquaintances hinted or spoke plainly on the subject; there were still stray offerings from distant friends of congratulations or wedding gifts, and the unhappy girl was thankful to escape from actual contact with a world that at this hour had nothing but annoyances to offer.

And no one could deny that Jessie filled the place she had taken with great success. She dressed to it with taste and decorum; she understood the servants intuitively, and made them fulfil their contracts and do the last tittle of their duty, and she won for herself a very real personal adherence and admiration among the acquaintances of the Lloyd family. "I am making

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, as John would say," she laughingly told Steve. "When we have our own house again, my visiting list will compare with the best in the city." And Steve had not the courage to oppose this intangible idea. He thought it would be best to wait until there was a proposition to realise it.

Just as Good Friday dawned, this unnatural condition of family affairs was brought to its climax. Alice was awakened by her mother out of a deep sleep, and she saw that on her face which needed no explanation. "Go back to him," she whispered, "and I will be with you in five minutes." Then she drew up the blind and let in the pale gray light, and as she did so felt the miserable influence of the evil comet then saddening the skies, and the wrack of clouds driven onward by the wind. Insensibly, she was terrified for the departing soul, and as she put on some clothing she began to pray. Her words were full of the stress and hurry of the parting hour, and as she hastened up the dim stairway to the death-room, she could but iterate over and over with a constantly increasing intensity, "Lord Jesus! save him, for thy mercy's sake!"

The end was close at hand, the silver cords binding the mortal to immortality were loosened. Nicholas Lloyd was drifting rapidly beyond the

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

reach or ken of earthly love. Whether he was conscious of his departure or not it was impossible to determine. His wide-open eyes were full of a sombre gloom, and pitifully restless. He was evidently imploring some last gratification. Steve understood this, and watched him with a reluctance and sorrow that was inexpressible. "Mother," he finally whispered, "I know what he wants. Shall I give him it?" She looked her assent, rather than spoke, and Steve took from his pocket some bank-bills, and put them into the fingers that were already clay.

But the dying man was no longer able to feel and finger them. His last earthly consolation had departed. It was a present death. Perhaps he then, for the first time, realised it, but speech was gone. He looked with awful inquiry into Steve's eyes, and then became suddenly still. A desperate calmness, a terrible desolation of soul marked that last hour, and the hearts of those that loved him were filled with dread and sadness.

Yet this last solemn journey of the freed soul was accompanied and followed by love and prayer. Wherever its course tended, it took with it the implorations of other souls that believed and trusted in the infinite, illimitable mercy of God. "Surely," said Alice, to her

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

mother, "the mercy which has begun with man's forgetfulness will be crowned with God's forgiveness. Father himself will now see right and wrong with the eyes of immortality. Do you think his soul will cease to pray when it has left the body? Perhaps, dear mother, it may now pray with a stronger and deeper sense of its need."

"Oh, Alice, if I could only think thus!"

"Is it not better, mother, to trust God too much than too little? May we not plead for a man with God as man pleadeth for his neighbour?"

"My doubts are great."

"My faith is beyond all doubts, for it rests on the love of God; and who shall separate us from that love? Neither height nor depth, nor any other thing;" and her face shone, and her assertion had all the conclusiveness of an intuition.

"But we are taught, Alice —"

"Ah, mother, I have come to believe that nothing goes to heaven but love, and that love can open the kingdom of heaven to all who pray at its gates. Anyway, we will not despair. Dr. Robertson says 'that is the unpardonable sin and a heavier weight than all the sins committed.'"

Alice knew of what she was speaking. She had arrived at that point where the satisfied

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

soul can be glad for "the good time when it was unhappy." Her days of affliction and disappointment had been turned into days of silence and prayer, flowing on like drops from the honey-comb; a spiritual joy utterly incomprehensible to the pride of drudging souls sworn to mammon; a spiritual faith founded on that tender revelation — God is love. Therefore she believed the anger of God to be but for a moment, and his pity to be eternal. He had commanded us to love our enemies, and she could not believe that he would disobey his own command. On her knees she humbly tried to hope that mercy might be shown even to one who had so slighted and disdainfully used the infinite loving-kindness.

Now, if perfume be sprayed into a room it may not be visible to the eye, but we are sensible of its presence, and so this element of hope in God's mercy lifted the intolerable gloom of despair and made it possible for the living to endure the stress of days and nights that held no other hope. For the home — in which Nicholas Lloyd had been the pervading thought — in a very few days knew him no more. All tokens of his suffering presence were removed; his very name was unspoken. Dead and buried, who is so soon forgotten as the merely rich man? His gold is his no longer, and he has nothing else



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

to leave. There were a few paragraphs about the dead millionaire in the daily papers—an account of the funeral—and then oblivion—nothing, not even pity or regret.

It was found that no will executed by Mr. Lloyd, of recent date, existed except the one made to satisfy the whim of a mentally sick man. This was not worth consideration. The other, made ten years previously, left everything to Steve after his mother's and sister's portions had been provided for. But Mrs. Lloyd declined all participation in her husband's wealth. She said she "had already more than she could wisely use and distribute," and she entreated Steve to take care of his father's accumulations and render out of them the charity belonging to God and the poor. As for Alice, the portion assigned her as the bride of Lord Medway was considered to be lawfully hers; but when this and all other claims had been satisfied, there still remained nearly six million dollars in real estate and in bonds and securities of the first class.

"It is your money, sir," said Mr. Phillips to Steve, "and you cannot put aside the claim it has on your wise management."

Steve flushed and trembled, and was aware of a sudden feeling of unlimited pleasure and responsibility. He had so often vowed not to

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

encumber himself with riches, so often declared he would be terrified to be the steward of enormous wealth, so often and so sincerely asserted that his father's death would not enrich him, that he felt all at sea, tossed to and fro without rudder or anchor, drifting with circumstances that were totally unexpected and unconsidered.

And it was in this perplexity and perturbation of mind that he was subjected to the entreaties of his wife, mother, sister, and lawyer. He was told by the latter that it would be an affectation of the worst kind to refuse his own on a mere social quibble. He was coaxed by the women of the family with plausible arguments, and half convinced that he had a mission to fulfil in the proper dispensation of so much gold. He was swayed by some internal charm,—he knew not what,—and became hourly more conscious of that authority which the mere possession of money creates. And thus pushed onward by unseen influences and outward powers, he gradually grew appreciative of his position and felt—though he did not realise it—the thrill of riches upon his spirit.

Jessie was now radiantly happy. The house on the avenue, the cottage at Newport, the carriages and horses, and steam yacht, were all within her grasp. The yacht fitted into



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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Steve's life-long dream, and he was so eager to realise this dream of his own, that he did not oppose whatever his wife wished as its equivalent. Jessie now, therefore, took upon herself the gratification of her desires. And this time she resolved to leave nothing for the future to fret over. The poor little flat was never again visited. Some cheap appraiser valued its contents and gave her a "paltry little check" for them, and then she felt free to build a home that would be a fitting one for her position.

This resolve, of course, implied time to perfect it; but Jessie's apparent good fortune did not desert her. Circumstances occurred soon after Mr. Lloyd's death which placed the Lloyd mansion at her disposal, and she was thus enabled at once to live in the style she had resolved to affect, and also to keep a close watch on the progress and development of her future plans. For very soon after Easter Lord Medway married Miss Leavenworth, and this event made it possible for Mrs. Lloyd and Alice to take the long holiday of travel they desired. After their weary watch and seclusion, it seemed indeed a most desirable change; but as long as Lord Medway was unmarried, there was a possibility of gossip which neither woman liked to face.

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

"It will be said we are running after him—that as he will not come to us, we go to him. Alice," Mrs. Lloyd ejaculated, "the thought of Europe at present is impossible. I wish it were not. I would like nothing better than a leisurely stroll through Italy with you."

Lord Medway's marriage was therefore not an unpleasant surprise. Possibly Alice had yet some sore feeling about the matter, but it was not hard to hide it under the satisfaction arising from the freedom it permitted. Instantly they began to plan for a two years' absence, and these plans included the occupancy of their New York and Newport homes by Steve and Jessie. Jessie considered this arrangement "a Providence," and Steve smiled at her consequential air and her ready appropriation of Providence, but did not deny the exorbitant stretch of her claim upon a divine planning for her particular wishes. In fact, all winter he had been gradually becoming more and more subject to his beautiful wife, and Jessie had almost begun to think him so far her bond slave as to make further charming and conciliation unnecessary.

Early in May Mrs. Lloyd and Alice left America for Italy, and Jessie, though she did not voice the thought, said mentally a very emphatic "Thank heaven for it!" When the steamer left its moorings she considered her en-

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

franchisement complete. Hitherto, in spite of all her efforts, she had been conscious of Mrs. Lloyd and Alice as controlling forces. There were certain things she did not like to do in their presence. Their look of calm dissent spoiled her finest aggressions. Their polite refusals infused doubt and often failure into her daring innovations. She was now absolutely mistress of her desires and of six million dollars.

The first pleasure she gave herself was one in which it delighted Steve to join her. This was the settlement of her father in Steve's position as agent of Mrs. Lloyd's "Homes" and other charities, and the buying and furnishing of a pretty country place for her mother. The delight and surprise of the ageing McAslins was very genuine and very great, and Jessie might have learned from this experience that it is our labours for others that make us cheerful, while labour for self always leaves behind a vague melancholy dissatisfaction.

Once more, then, Steve saw his idolised wife completely happy. In her splendid residence she ruled autocratically; she gave orders and received callers, and laid all sorts of splendid plans for her future social supremacy. And it was not difficult for Steve, in his own way, to follow her example. His way was the way of

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

the sea. He was resolved to have the finest yacht that could be built. To be skipper of such a craft would be his most improbable dream come true. He spent his time in preparing for such a realisation. To put off into space, to get out of sight and sound of all humanity but such as he could control, to leave all obligations behind him, to forget there were such things as letters, or papers, or plans, or settlements, to be alone with God and the ocean and the great winds that revel on the ocean,—this was the heaven upon earth which in certain moods the restless, vivid young man most ardently desired.

While he was in uncertainty about his father's money, and even while accustoming himself to the feeling and state and circumstance of his new position, he had kept out of the way of John McAslin. He heard of him, he read of him, but he made no effort to see him. And John would not force the old friendship between them. He knew the transforming power of gold, and thought it quite probable Steve would like to forget the past. Nothing was further from Steve's intention, but the fresh responsibilities he had assumed sat with difficulty on him, and he was hardly ready to be himself under them. One night, however, in the latter part of June, he went eastward to look for John. He

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

knew where he was to speak, and he wished to see for himself if the old John remained unchanged. He wondered too how the opinions he had been wont to indorse would now affect him. He wished to try to test self by an unprepared judge and ordeal.

He found John in the lecture room of a church on Fourth Avenue. There was no crowd there, no jostling, no bandying of jokes or greetings, no enthusiasm, and none of that ready oratory and disposition to deny, argue, and answer back that was always a marked feature in more secular places of meeting. A fair proportion of the audience was composed of women, but men and women alike were of that calm, respectable class which are not easily moved by any force outside the narrow circles of their own domesticities. Indeed, there was on the faces of many a set opposition, and as soon as Steve had listened a few minutes he was not astonished. For John was arraigning the Church in general in such language as could not permit any one to shirk the questions he touched.

"The Church has practically lost all effectual hold on the working classes," he was saying, "and there is an awful shipwreck of redeemed humanity, of which the responsibility falls on the Church."

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

"Facts! Facts! Mr. McAslin," interrupted an aggressive-looking man near the platform. "We came here for facts, not for generalities. Take some great question of the day and tell us how the Church has neglected her duty."

"Socialism, for instance," said a woman by his side, with a little frightened laugh.

John bowed to her and accepted the proposition. "Socialism," he cried, "is the essential spirit of Christianity. Not the socialism of the Nihilist assassin, or the Communistic petroleuse, but the socialism of the New Testament. What is the socialism of the New Testament? It is the brotherhood of mankind springing from the fatherhood of God. It is the cheerful coming under the burdens of others in order to elevate and bless. It is the spirit of your own homes carried into the larger homes of your villages, towns, and cities of your country, and of the whole world. Say that you have sons and daughters. One may be clever and beautiful, another much less so. One may be healthy and strong, another weak and suffering. Is there therefore jealousy and oppression on your hearthstone? Not if a true family bond unites you. All will rejoice in the success of the brilliant brother or the lovely sister. All will unite to help the weak or the deficient. In a loving family who is more powerful than the

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

baby? Who is better beloved and served than the invalid? This is the true socialistic spirit. If our hearts and our churches were filled with this spirit of Christ, we could do as he did and carry this influence into the world around us. This is the Gospel of the first century. It is the Gospel of the nineteenth, and will be the Gospel until time shall be no more. But this socialism the Church does not practise; she does not even preach it."

"Proof! Proof! Proof!" came from various parts of the assembly.

"I will give it. Take the words Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Have not the shining letters of these names a tremendous fascination for all mankind? They are the most powerful words in any language. They stir the hearts of the suffering and the oppressed like a trumpet blast from heaven. These words belong by right to the Church. They are among her most glorious watchwords! They represent the powers and principalities of her sacred kingdom! What use has she made of them? None. She has left Nihilists, and Communists, and Positivists, and Anarchists, and Atheists, and a revolutionary press to preach from these charming texts. While the Church has been teaching men dogmas, and wasting her time, and money, and arguments, and strength on

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

creeds of men's making, she has left false teachers to preach a false Utopia from the most glorious words of her own holy charter."

"Then, John, you would have the Church preach socialism?" asked Steve, from his seat at the edge of the assembly.

The voice, the tone, the bright face of the speaker, who stood with one hand on the back of his chair and the other stretched out toward the platform, instantly raised in John's heart an access of enthusiasm.

"I would have the Church preach Fraternity, Equality, Liberty, as Christ taught them. The purest, truest, sweetest, loftiest socialism is in the New Testament. The Church of the future will have to preach it or be silent altogether. She will have to tell men to undo heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free and break every yoke; that is, she will have to preach against all the sins of cheapness,—adulteration, unpaid labour, all the 'bargains' to which human flesh and blood and spirit have contributed, whether they come from the sweat of the hands or the sweat of the brain. She will have to drop creeds and dogmas, and feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and house the homeless. How many millions of money are sunk in churches that are closed, even against prayer, six days out of the seven? And





THE KING'S HIGHWAY

yet they are called 'Houses of God,' and thousands of God's children have not where to lay their heads.

If Christ should suddenly stand upon Broadway,
And if the poor and homeless round him flocked,
Where would he lead them? To the churches? Nay!
At those shut doors no Christ would 'stand and knock.'"

"Go on, John," cried Steve. "Tell us more about the Church of the future."

"The Church of the future will have to teach men a different measure of success, or of what is called success. She will not honour those who grow rich without a conscience, and then build a college and give a gift like a sop to the Almighty, and to the public whom they have robbed. Rich men must grow rich innocently, or she will not indorse them. She will not teach men Methodism, or Presbyterianism, or Catholicism; she will teach them justice, truth, tolerance, humanity to the whole animal world, and a boundless loving-kindness and pity for the sick, the morally and mentally deficient, the poor and the suffering. She will not pass by any wrong that may spring from the circumstances of the day; she will be justly angry at it, and with unrelenting perseverance get that wrong definitely stamped and transfixed."

"You are setting the Church of the future a

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

tremendous work. Who is able for it? Who is to do it?" cried a listener.

"We are to do it," answered John. "Every single one of us is our brother's keeper. It is our place to consider the signs of the times. It is our place to defend the rights of the poor and oppressed. Even now God is asking 'Whom shall I send, and who will go with us?' Which of you will answer, 'Here am I; send me'?"

"The power of the Church is in her unity," said some one, and John lifted the word instantly and repeated it. "Unity! that is it. If the Church would only unite, without regard to name or creed, she would be invincible. The gates of hell should not, could not, prevail against her. She might do anything she wished to do. She might abolish drunkenness. She might make a dishonourable, unkind, selfish deed unfashionable, and it would go out of fashion. The Church, as a united force, abrogating creed, standing on the simple foundation of the fatherhood of God, and the consequent brotherhood of man, might make any reform she wished to make. How much reforms of all kinds are needed you may see for yourselves if you will go from out of this meeting, not to your own comfortable homes, but down into the haunts of those poor men and women who have no homes,

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

and among that congregation of miserales that inspired the pitifully majestic invocation of Hilaire Belloc: —

'Almighty God, whose justice like a sun
Shall coruscate along the floors of heaven;
Raising what 's low, perfecting what 's undone,
Breaking the proud and making odd things even,
The poor of Jesus Christ along the street
In your rain sodden, in your snows unshod,
They have no hearth, nor roof, nor daily meat,
Nor even the bread of men, Almighty God.
The poor of Jesus Christ whom no man hears
Have called upon your vengeance much too long.
Wipe out not tears but blood, our eyes bleed tears;
Come, smite our damned sophistries so strong,
That thy rude hammer battering this rude wrong
Ring down the abyss of twice ten thousand years.'

I have nothing to-night to add to this grand prayer," said John. He almost whispered the words, and yet they were audible through every corner of the still room. And men and women, with hearts burning, and with eyes heavy with tears, and cheeks flaming with emotion, or pale with pity, looked wonderingly, gratefully, even reverently at the man who had so moved their highest selves, and they went quietly to their houses, pondering the words they might never, never forget; yea, though it might be the fires of remorse or of too late repentance that brought them again to remembrance.

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

Steve waited for his friend. He was quieter than usual, but trembling with feeling. "John! Dear John!" he said, "you have done me good. Come home with me. I have much to say to you."

"I will. How is Jessie?"

"She is in Newport. I believe she is well."

"You did not go to Lloyd Park this year?"

"No. The place is virtually shut up. Jessie preferred Newport. I shall go there also in a few days. John, you have made me tremble to-night. Tell me what I ought to do with all this money that I can neither refuse, nor yet, I fear, use properly. It is a great burden. What shall I do with it?"

"Open up the King's Highway! Prepare it for the coming of the Lord! Apollyon has indeed straddled over the whole width of it, and under his evil wings drunkards, thieves, and oppressors of every kind find shelter. The poor are tormented, the broken in heart terrified, the sick and suffering can hardly find their way to the grave. Go out like another Greatheart; feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the sorrowful. Steve! Steve! there are such great opportunities before you! I am terrified lest you neglect them. What is it to be? Are you going to prepare golden futures of love and work? Or must life go by fruitless, and you

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

not dare to search your will and your heart till at the last hour the past shall clang and flash for you as for a drowning man?"

"I hope not, John! I can see there is much to be done, and I can feel that I am not the man to do much. The very magnitude of the work oppresses me and makes me hopeless."

"With the magnitude of the work you have nothing to do, Steve. 'It is not incumbent on us to complete the work, but not therefore must we cease from it;' that is from the Talmud — but it is good Christianity. And why should you fear? The light is on your face, and the shadows all behind your back."

Steve sighed, but he went into his house grasping John's hand, and he was strengthened by its touch, and his heart was full of a great purpose.

CHAPTER XIII

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

THE two men went straight to Steve's private room. The windows were open, and the light and stir of the avenue entered through them. They sat down without turning on the gas; the dim reflection from the street-lamps was sufficient for their conversation. Steve was pressed by his emotions and opened the conversation with eagerness, even as they drew their chairs to the window.

"I want to give a million dollars away, John," he said. "How shall I do it wisely?"

"You mean that you want to give it for the purposes of charity?"

"Yes. That is what I mean. It is only right and just that I should do so; besides, it fits all my noblest inclinations."

"It is also wise, Steve. Charity is the salt of riches; it preserves them. Riches have wings, but Charity clips them. I am glad that it is both your duty and your pleasure to remember those ready to perish."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"But I cannot disburse such a sum personally," said Steve. "Even if it were possible, I should make a great bungle of it, for if I ever attempt to give a dollar, I have to give another dollar, and I am at my wit's end as to what I ought to do."

"Very few men know how to give, Steve," answered John, "and for such, vicarious charity is not only all, but it is also the best they can do. Charity, however, is not a matter of accident or of feeling. It is not casual. It is an habitual well-doing which will work out its own channels, and not be diverted from them."

"We must find out together, John, some great co-operative ways and facilities for doing good."

"We have already a great many charitable societies, Steve, with which you are more or less acquainted. And then there is the McAuley Mission, and the Cremorne Mission, and the Florence Mission, and that wonderful Bowery Mission for men that you and I stepped into accidentally one night. I say 'accidentally,' Steve, because what we call 'accident' is Providence, and is usually God's part in any event. Do you remember?"

"I am not likely ever to forget those four hundred poor fellows. What pathetic experiences of temptation, and fall, and repentance they told! I knew only too well how true they

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

were; I, myself, had been in similar straits. Oh, John, what can we do to help such weak, unhappy, struggling men?"

"We can strengthen the hands of those already familiar with the work. You cannot personally go down among them, and see that they are fed, and washed, and clothed, and work found for their hands, and comfort for their hearts, and divine instruction for their souls; but you can give the wherewithal to provide these necessities. Give them a substantial lift to start with. They want a chapel, they want a reading-room, they want better dormitories and baths; oh, they want so many things! You can increase their comforts and their usefulness on every side. How many hundreds are, at this moment, wandering in the darkness and despair of this great city, that could be saved and blessed if there was room to take them in, and money to provide for their urgent necessities!"

"John, these worthy charities for men shall have their aid in good season. We will see about it to-morrow morning, as soon as possible. Oh, my heart goes out to every man, without love and home, in the outer darkness of these stony streets! How easy it is for them to do wrong! How hard to do right!"

"With all my heart I will go with you. Have you no special idea with regard to spending so

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

much money? You have been much and familiarly among the poor; you have seen and tasted their life in its bitterness; is there then from your own experience no special light on the subject?"

"Yes, John. I will tell you a charity greatly needed — it is a Transportation Fund for working mechanics and labourers."

"I don't understand, Steve."

"I will explain. When I was last in Chicago there were hundreds of bricklayers, stonemasons, and plasterers out of work. Nothing to do in Chicago, and yet plenty to do in New York. But they could not get to New York. They had not the money. This is but one small example of a condition constantly occurring. Now, then, what is needed is a fund for transporting sober, *bona-fide* workers of all kinds from place to place, as the exigencies of labour demand them. I think it would be better to send them to where work is than to open soup kitchens and dole out bread to enforced idleness."

"It would be much better and much more honourable and just. It would be giving the workers good with their own hands, which is God's way of helping. There would doubtless be cases in which it would be proper also to send the family with the father of it; but this and other contingencies must be well considered and

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

provided for. Your idea, however, is a very good one, Steve, and the help it promises is much needed."

"Well, then, the Transportation Fund is our second object. What is the next?"

"I heard the other day of a proposal to buy a little isle washed by the ocean, and to make it a sunshine land for the poor miserable children who have never, in all their lives, known a day's pleasure, never had any childhood, never had any play or any playthings, never tasted the sweets which are as necessary as food to their growing frames, never known what love and laughing, and singing and praying, and clean beds, and nice eating, and kind words might mean. To give these wronged, unhappy babies a chance for a little happiness, to put them on the right road, to see — as far as possible — that they keep to it, to make them believe in God's love, because they feel man's love, and believe in the happiness of heaven because they have tasted happiness on earth —"

"Oh, John! John! This is best of all! I believe in the children most of all. You can do a great deal with a child, a great deal with a boy that you can't do with a man, a great deal with a girl that you can't do with a woman."

"That is true; so, then, the children must have a wide and gracious showing, for life is so

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

hard and grim that if we take the joy of the children out of it we shall learn to believe that joy is dead. What else, Steve?"

"I have had one other dream for humanity that I would like to make come true — though in ever so small a respect. When I wandered about the great Western wildernesses, in which no man stays, I wondered and wondered at their lovely solitudes, but whenever I came back to this city, crowded with humanity, I wondered more and more, and I was haunted by four lines day and night, and set my footsteps to them, and let the problem they involved drive me helplessly hither and thither: —

'The soil lies fallow, the woods grow rank,
Yet idle the poor man stands;
Oh! millions of hands want acres,
And millions of acres want hands!'

Something can surely be done to bring these two 'wants' together, John!"

"Certainly, Steve. We shall have to invoke legislation, perhaps, and delay will be necessary in order to be sure we are going right and doing right, but the project is highly possible. Suppose we plant one hundred homes in these fertile wilds of the West, how many homes would spring from the hundred? Enough in a generation or two to make the desolate places

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

wave with golden wheat, and blossom like the rose. And though men and women would bring their sins and sorrows into the innocent places, they would also bring the music of psalm and song, and the imploration and joy of prayer and praise. We must then have a Land Fund as well as a Transportation Fund. But, Steve, have you not some favourite object of kindness, some peculiar good that you would like to do, just because it would give your heart a real, personal pleasure?"

"Yes, I have, John. I have an object which had my full consideration and my whole heart when I had not a dollar to give it, and never expected to have a dollar. I want to give one hundred thousand dollars — perhaps more — to increase, if possible, legislation for the protection of animals."

"Legislation — for animals?"

"Yes, for I have discovered that it is impossible to make the popular mind connect guilt with things the law does not punish."

"But for animals?"

"Yes, and a hundred times, yes!"

"Animals! — when there are men, women, and children?"

"Yes, and a hundred times, yes!"

"The beasts that perish —"

"Do they perish? Dare you affirm it?"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"But, Steve," John persisted, "supremacy over animals is distinctly given to man."

"If so, then we have made it like Satan's, a supremacy of pain. Our animal code is written in the blood of the helpless, confiding creatures who have to trust in us."

"Consider their inferiority."

"In what?"

"Well, even physically."

"Nonsense! Men have physically inferior senses to animals. Our teeth are yet primitive. A dog has a more serviceable nose than a man has. The eagle has a far better eye. What do you think of the dragon-fly with twelve thousand lenses in his eyes? The sheep has a better ankle-joint than we have. The horse's foot is a single, compact elastic toe; its heel is carried in the air, and never touches the ground, which gives it a spring and motion far beyond the capacity of the human plantigrade. Whatever lightness of step man possesses comes through his intellect. Have you not noticed, John, that whenever the mental powers suffer, or are weak, the man slouches."

"Still, only to man has God given speech."

"How can you say such a thing? We don't speak dog and horse language, and dogs and horses don't speak human language. It is unreasonable to expect it. But consider dogs, with

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

which we are both familiar. Different races of dogs have different voices. Listen to the bark of the English mastiff, and compare it with that of the French poodle, or the Danish hound, or the Scotch terrier. How different are the barks of joy, anger, and danger! Can you not easily distinguish between the whine of impatience, the howl of pain, the gradations of tail-wagging, forepaw lifting, ear-cocking, smiling, and bowing? You do, John. You know them well. The speech of horses is just as intelligent, though mainly a sign language. Birds have a large vocabulary. Did you never listen to two or three cocks challenging each other? They are polite also, and wait as patiently as the heroes of Homer, while their opponents relate the sonorous narratives of their birth and prowess. There is speech, John, among all living creatures. Even the humming of the bee has elaborate gradations that our poor senses cannot realise. And I wish often that I could understand the fine speech that goes on in the language of the antennæ. You may be very sure that what you call the dumb creation have a mother tongue of their own that answers all the purposes of our most perfect speech."

"We know so little of them, Steve."

"And we ought to be ashamed of our ignorance. But we do know, at least, that they

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

are singularly like ourselves. Why, even the 'night side of Nature' casts its gloom and terror over them. Indeed, it is likely they have in a degree greater than ourselves a sensitiveness to the occult, unseen world around us. This is specially true of dogs and horses. It has been said that storks can foresee the burning of a house on whose roof they have built, and that they remove their nest before the catastrophe. Rats will leave a doomed ship. No bird will willingly stay in a cage in which a bird has died. To it, the cage is haunted. We are ready enough to endow animals with our bad qualities, very reluctant to share with them our higher ones."

"Then you imagine they have moral claims on us?"

"Balaam was reprov'd for striking his ass unjustly. Any animal to which we can be unjust has moral claims we have no right to outrage."

"You will become a crank on this subject, I fear, Steve."

"I hope so. Oh, John, remember all the cruelties you have witnessed this past year; and then think that hundreds of thousands have seen, each, a different series of cruelties in the same time!"

"I never imagined we were a cruel people."

"Because you have not considered the

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

brutalities inflicted upon animals in passion, in deliberate revenge, in unprovoked love of tormenting, in barbarous carelessness of all their needs and pain. Think what they suffer from people whose business it is to take them to slaughter! Think of their slow deaths by compulsory labour beyond their power! Think of what they suffer from hunger and thirst, from cold and from heat! Think of how they are mangled for what is called 'science;' worse still for what is called 'sport'! Think of the docked horses, and of horses uselessly tortured by the bearing rein! Yet men, calling themselves 'gentle' men, ride behind these suffering animals without one qualm of conscience or one feeling of shame."

"Don't get into a passion, Steve."

"I do well to get into a passion, John. I have thrashed a good many men and boys for brutality to animals and birds. I consider these thrashings the finest actions of my life. Oh, John, if I had your tongue; if I had the tongues of angels,—I would go through the length and breadth of the land, and preach to men and to women and to children from this text, 'Am I not a beast and a brother?'"

"I will admit that Christianity has not made this subject of sufficient importance."

"And this omission is, and has been, ever

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

the weak spot in Christianity. Celsus, eighteen centuries ago, brought this charge against it. Priests were accustomed to turn shrines into shambles. Long after Rome was christianised, the most brutal and degrading combats between men and beasts continued, and were not put a stop to until the monk Telemachus leaped into the arena and separated the combatants, and was stoned to death by the angry Christian spectators. Only a few rarer spirits among the Christian clergy, such as St. Francis, John Wesley, and Bishop Butler, have thought of pleading the cause of animals."

"Is it not a subject for home teaching, rather than for the pulpit?" asked John.

"If so, then parents are shamefully negligent in this matter. They suffer their children to glut their cruelty on cats, frogs, or any other helpless creature that cannot protect itself. Teachers have not yet accepted it as a duty, though they might do a great deal to make the future man and woman merciful."

"We have done a great deal within the last fifty years, Steve. At the beginning of this century Sir Walter Scott did not hesitate to make James Fitz-James, in the Lady of the Lake, ride a noble horse to death. Any magistrate now would convict and punish a man for such cruelty, and no respectable writer

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

would dare to make his hero guilty of such a brutal crime."

"I am grateful for what has been done, and I look forward to a day when cruelty to animals will rouse the same pity and indignation in the hearts of all that cruelty to children, or to slaves, or to prisoners, or to any helpless portion of humanity rouses. The great trouble is —"

"What is the great trouble, Steve?"

"That we live in the world of the Levite. Non-interference is our rule. We hate a scene, and therefore we suffer the wrong we see and know to be a wrong to go unpunished. Our non-interference makes us selfish, and selfishness makes us indifferent. Now, John, in your Church of the future mercy to animals and a clear recognition of their rights must have a place. It will be a great factor in the moral uplifting of men."

"How do you see that, Steve?"

"In this way. We do not flog even criminal men, because we believe we brutalise men by flogging them. Yet we let them brutalise themselves by permitting them to flog and torture the creatures within their power. This injustice and ferocity must be stopped! You must do your best to stop it!"

"It is a new subject of thought to me, Steve. But I can see and feel its importance."

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Then speak for it, John. Put your heart into it. I will put my gold into it. What a joy! what a blessing to be able to do it! Whatever else we do, we will at least try to clear the King's Highway of some of those brutes that fill it with the groans of creatures innocently bruised and beaten and done to death with unmerited tortures!"

"There are many other grand objects that this one will fit well into, Steve; but they must be well considered. Charity cannot be casual. It must be, as I said at first, an habitual well-doing, working along its own well-defined channels."

"That is right. We will have even charity done wisely and in order. I want every dollar to do its full measure of good; and though charity, shooting at random, can hardly miss a mark, yet I am well aware that some marks are better than others, and that picked shots are best of all."

"One million dollars! Steve, we will start 'The King's Highway Fund' with it! We will not stop at a million! How many millions of money must be spent, how many noble lives given up, ere the Way of the Lord is made straight, and all its rough places smooth, and all that defiles it removed, and the width and the length of it regained from Apollyon, who

CLEAR THE KING'S HIGHWAY

walks there seeking souls that may be snared or slain!"

"It is a great work, John, but we will not be discouraged. Remember what you said, 'It is not incumbent on us to finish the work, but not therefore must we cease from it.'"

And the young men impulsively stood up, clasping hands as they did so, and the vow in their hearts was none the less binding because it found no speech worthy of it. And for one moment, in this exaltation of full surrender, they touched the highest peaks of spiritual joy.

Then all too soon came the reaction that ever follows such rare moments. Both felt suddenly weary, and Steve said, "How thoughtless I have been! You must be worn out, John. Come, and I will show you a room where you can sleep and rest." The glory of the spiritual had passed, but it had left behind that enlargement of soul which could never be satisfied with anything less than the love, and will, and work of God; then

*Deem not profitless these fleeting moods
Of shadowy exaltation, not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul
Remembering how she felt — but what she felt
Remembering not — retains an obscure sense
Of possible solemnity.*



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Such moments are testimonies to the largeness of a spiritual life, whose voice must ever be to us in our mortal state

Like sighings of illimitable forests,
And waves of an unfathomable sea.

CHAPTER XIV

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

FOR three years there were only such changes in the Lloyd and McAslin families as would naturally flow from the tide of events which had thrown their destinies together. Mrs. Lloyd and Alice remained abroad, wandering at their leisure from one famous city to another, and doing good in many small, unobserved ways only known to themselves and the recipients of their benevolence. For Mrs. Lloyd was no longer solely occupied with her own soul and her own salvation; she had discovered that they who wish to go to heaven alone are not likely to get there. Solitary prayer and meditation on her own spiritual condition, though not abandoned, were subordinated to that active faith in God which proves itself by continual help to man. She had taken into her heart as the ideal Christian life that little saying of Saint Peter's about Jesus of Nazareth — "a man approved of God, who went about doing good."

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Alice was her cheerful and ready helper. Her great delight was in the musical facilities offered in European cities, and these very facilities were frequent opportunities for the wisest charity. Through them she was brought naturally into contact with refined and educated people suffering the straits and pangs of unconfessed poverty,—young women, mostly of her own land, struggling bravely against unconsidered necessities, deluded with false hopes, despairing for some slight encouragement, homesick, poor, and friendless,—and many of such cases found help and hope from Alice Lloyd.

The chagrin and disappointment resulting from her relationship with Lord Medway had slipped from her mind like a disagreeable dream, and the slow, sweet hours passed in gaining knowledge and in doing good brought her only that content which is another name for happiness. The one thorn in her heart was her treatment of John McAslin. The wound others had given her was healed; the wound she had given herself still pained her. She felt that she had been unjust to John. She had thrown upon him a faithlessness she alone was to blame for. She had ignored rights John might reasonably have claimed, and then been angry with him for the manly reserve that made him choose to bear his suffering alone.

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

She still loved,—for a first true love is not easily slain,—but she did not hope. She was sure John had forgotten her, and she never spoke of him; for the feeling that comes with the revelation that all is over is gathered silently into the heart.

Sometimes there came a letter to Mrs. Lloyd from John, but it was solely on business. He was now Steve's lawyer, and the manager of all his immense property, and occasionally circumstances came up in which it was necessary to consult Mrs. Lloyd, or to obtain her co-operation. These letters had the clear, straightforward tone of John's nature and methods, but they never exceeded the legitimate courtesy of the position. Every one of them gave Alice pain. For a day or two after the receipt of any missive from John, she abandoned her heart to vain longing and regrets, and to despairs hard to control and vanquish. One day, while thus suffering, she suddenly became very homesick.

"Mother," she said, "I want to go back to America. We have been a long time away."

"Then we will go back, Alice. I, too, shall be glad to return. The wish has been lying in my heart for a long time. I will write to Steve this morning and see if he can come and help us. We have gathered many treasures, and

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

these it will be necessary to pack properly. Then there are the custom-house liabilities and formalities which I do not understand, and would not dare to face."

"Do you think Steve will come?"

"I am sure he will come if he is able."

"Jessie may stand in the way."

"Not of Steve's duty. And I think Steve will consider our comfort his duty."

So the letter was written, and it reached Steve one morning as he was eating his breakfast. Strangely enough, there was a letter to him from Mrs. McAslin also. Steve still retained his habit of early rising, and as it was near the noon hour when Jessie usually appeared, a solitary breakfast was inevitable. Sometimes his little son Jack took his bread and milk beside him, and sometimes the nurse brought little Miss Lucy for her father's morning kiss; but as a regular thing Steve took his breakfast with his own thoughts, or the daily papers. His mother's letter pleased him very much. He longed to see her and his sister, and he longed with all his soul for some lawful and desirable change. He felt as if his whole best being were in a state of atrophy; he had even ceased to rebel against a life that was yet an intolerable demand. To go to sea; to feel the fresh salt winds in his face; to throw out

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

of his memory dinners, and dances, and dressing,—oh, what a miracle of relief it would be! He had not one hesitation about the journey. He was only too thankful for so good an excuse.

Suddenly he remembered his wife, and a frown darkened his sunny face. For the relation between them had become a very formal one. Steve still loved her, and Jessie loved her husband perhaps far better than she knew. But before all love and all family duties, Jessie put her social success. It had been a very pronounced and steady success. She had reaped all the honours of that "leadership" which had been her ambition; but with these honours had come obligations which gave her no time for personal affections, and which demanded so much from her, in mere physical strength, that she had no ability to cultivate her home pleasures. They slipped out of her grasp; they were delayed from day to day, until they gave her a sense of reproach, and were then relegated to some paid servant. She was carrying a cup full to the brim, but there was nothing satisfying in it, and she was just beginning to confess so much to her own heart.

That very morning, as she came downstairs, she had stepped into her nursery and kissed her babies and felt in their prattle and embraces a



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

purer joy than all the adulation of fashionable crowds had ever given her. "I will go to Lloyd Park next week," she thought, "and with the children watch the spring break into lilies and lilacs. I am tired to death, and I look tired — almost haggard — in the morning light. I will tell Steve to have the house put in order. He will be pleased at that. Poor fellow, he has n't had much to please him for a long time!"

She did not expect to see her husband. He was usually with John at that hour; but when she opened the door of the breakfast parlour, Steve was sitting there. His face had lost its happy glow; he looked troubled, and as Jessie entered his eyes involuntarily fell upon the open letter at his side. She said "good morning," and Steve answered the greeting; then he lifted her mother's letter and gave it to her. She read it with a look of annoyance that deepened to anger.

"I cannot possibly go to-day," she said, as she threw the irritating message on the table. "You know, Steve, that this ball to the Princess Kara will be the ball of the season. My dress is ready for it, and it has cost a mint of money. I am in the Princess' Quadrille, and my absence is simply out of the question."

"Still, from your mother's letter to me, I

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

should imagine she was very weak and sick."

"Typhoid fever leaves every one who has it very weak and sick. I am sure I have sent every earthly thing I could think of in the shape of wines and delicacies, and I have been out twice to see her."

"Flora has been with her five weeks, and she is now compelled to go to her home."

"Flora has not the obligations I have."

"She has a husband and three babies."

"She had all her children with her. I wonder how mother endured them. They were so noisy they gave me a headache, and my travelling dress was utterly ruined by their dirty little fingers."

"Did you read the letter through?"

"No, I did not. I saw it was the same old complaint — why don't you come and see us? I am tired of it. I go as often as I can."

"Then you do not know what is said about your father?"

"Is there anything wrong with father?"

"He is losing his eyesight — that is all — losing it so rapidly that your mother says if you do not come soon he will never see your face again. He asks constantly to see you."

"Poor father! I will go to-morrow or the next day."

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Go to-day, Jessie."

"I cannot go to-day. Why do you ask me, Steve? Do you want to make me miserable? It is too bad! No one seems to have the least pity on me. Yet I am sure no one is more weary and worn out. My engagements have been something frightful the last month—the pace is simply killing me!"

"Then stop it. You are not forced to such a treadmill. There is no sentence of 'hard labour' against you. Stop it all, Jessie! Oh, how good it would be to get into the country and live like sensible human beings once more!"

"Indeed it would."

"Do you really mean that, Jessie?"

"I do."

"Thank God, then!"

"I said to myself, as I came downstairs, that I would ask you to get Lloyd Park ready for us. I want to take the children there and let them see the spring come—now, what are you hesitating about? I thought that for once I would be asking you to do the thing you wanted to do."

"I'll tell you, Jessie. There is a little *contretemps*—something quite unlooked for. Mother and Alice are coming home, and they are sure to go to the Park when they return."

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

You know it is mother's own house. But I will tell John to look for a beautiful place and buy it for you."

"The idea of your mother and Alice coming from Europe when every other person is going there. That is precisely their way. And you have grumbled in season and out of season about my devotion to city life; yet the moment I wish to go to the country there is 'a little *contretemps*.'"

"Can I help it that mother is coming home?"

"I dare say you are delighted."

"I am. I love my mother, and if you loved yours, you would go to her this very day. At any rate, your poor father's case—"

"Steve, mind your own affairs. I am quite capable of 'honouring my father and my mother' without your advice. If you know anything you know that this ball, of all others, is indispensable. I must go."

"Can't you run out and see them for an hour? You can take the six o'clock train home, and be in time for the ball."

"Can I perform a miracle?" Jessie demanded.

"No matter how much will I have, for such an undertaking I have not the strength."

"Then I think I will go for you," said Steve.

"All right! You may as well go there as loaf around John's office."

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Jessie, I must go to Europe next Saturday."

"What do you say?"

"I must go to Europe. Mother and Alice need me."

"I need you, too."

"You can get along very well without me, Jessie. I am only needed to escort you to drawing-rooms, or hold your fan or bouquet. John will look out for a country place if you really wish one, and there you will have no use for me."

"Don't be absurd, Steve! And for Heaven's sake don't look so lackadaisical and lasslorn."

Then Steve shrugged his shoulders and rose to leave the room, and Jessie set down her coffee cup and looked curiously into the pained, sombre face of her husband. He was going out with the listless trail his thoughts induced when she called him back.

"Steve," she said, "if you see mother tell her I will certainly come to-morrow or the next day."

"I shall not go to see her — I could not give her such a message."

"You are as disagreeable as you usually are."

"Is there any other thing I can do for you?"

"Stop in at Thorley's and order some orchids for me."

"Anything else?"

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

"Don't get your ticket for Europe. I want you here."

"Mother has asked nothing from me for three years, Jessie. I am now going to Europe to bring her safely home."

"You shall not go."

"I shall assuredly go to Europe on Saturday next, as you will go to the ball to-night." And the declaration was a true one, though neither of them at that hour knew how awfully true it was.

Then Steve went down-town to talk with John about a country place, and to take a passage for England, and Jessie leisurely finished her breakfast and glanced at the headings of the daily papers. Before she left the room she lifted again her mother's letter, and this time read it to the last word. It pained her, and it angered her. "Why didn't mother put off writing for one day longer?" she mentally exclaimed. "Then I would have answered her letter in person — I want to do right, but every one and everything is against me. I am sure I have been very good to father and mother, and Steve has done everything in the world to make them happy; mother knows my days are cut into fifty pieces — she is unreasonable, and that is the long and the short of it. Poor father! I am sorry for him! He was always

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

so cheerful and so patient, and so hardworking, so happy to get us any little pleasure; as for Flora, it is easy for her to be at home; one place is as good as another to a woman in her position; what disagreeable children she has!"

Then she rang the bell, and ordered her carriage, and went down to Tiffany's to see if her opals had been reset to her satisfaction. She expected Steve to be at home for dinner, but he was not present; so then she concluded he had gone to comfort her mother after all. "It would be just like him!" she whispered, and it did please her to think of the duty being done; did please her that any one would do it for her; for she was not willing in any way to weary or disappoint herself in order to fulfil it. Nor was she angry with herself for her selfishness. She was only angry with destiny for not arranging her duties at convenient times, and with her mother for putting before her as a duty what she wished to regard as a kindness, within her own time and convenience.

It was an unpleasant day altogether. The nurse said the children were cross; the housekeeper had trouble in the kitchen; there were some disagreeable callers, and when her dress came home and was tried on, several alterations were needed. She had determined to rest herself and keep her mind as composed as possible,

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

and after all she was in such a state of nervous tension that she could not begin dressing until some restorative had been taken. She ordered a cup of strong tea, and poured into it a stimulant. It was not an habitual thing with her; she knew it was destruction to her complexion, and that it always produced in her an exaltation of feeling that approached recklessness, but she considered that there would be plenty of time before leaving home for this exaltation to become a pleasant languor or high-bred *ennui*.

But the contradictory, annoying spirit which had dashed all the day was not exorcised by her personal stimulation. Two things were especially aggravating, — Steve's absence, and the sick headache of her maid. "Steve, of course, has missed the train," she reflected, "and now he cannot be home until it is fully time for me to leave the house. I shall have to wait for him. It is too bad;" and just as she came to this conclusion she was told that her usual dresser was "unable to lift her head, and that Corinne," the French nurse, "would take her duty at madame's toilet."

"It is a part of the whole day's misfortunes," she thought, as she gloomily seated herself before the glass, — "the Lloyds' coming back just at this time — mother's sickness — father's calamity — Steve's going away when I want him to



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

take charge of our removal to the country — the house in insurrection — sick children — sick maid, and Corinne to dress me for the ball of the whole winter! I wonder what evil star is over me?"

Poor Corinne had a bad hour of it. The beautiful dress on which French modistes had exhausted their taste and skill was declared to "be an abominable failure." It was too tight. It was not becoming. It was bad style. In vain the opal necklace flashed its sprite-like flames above the gorgeous silk and lace; Jessie was thoroughly dissatisfied with her appearance. However, there was at last one good thing — she heard, through all her grumbling and complaining, Steve's strong, quick step, and she sent Corinne to tell him that she was already dressed and waiting for him.

As the girl hurried on her mission Jessie suddenly remembered that she had not examined "the hang" of the dress. She arranged the glass for this purpose and walked off to see the effect of the long train. The lights were above her head. She wanted light lower down. She lifted two of the wax candles burning at the side of her mirror, and set them on the floor. The next minute she was in the midst of mounting flame. Piercing shrieks filled the house, though she retained her self-control and

JESSIE'S HARD LESSON

tried to stifle the blaze. It was impossible. She herself was burning, and with the crazy impulse of unspeakable terror and agony, she fled towards the door.

At that moment Steve came leaping downstairs to her rescue. Once before, in California, he had heard those shrieks of burning humanity, and he divined what calamity had now produced them again in his ears. In his flight he had seized a blanket, and in this he enfolded her. Servants were already flying hither and thither for doctors; but it was some minutes ere Steve mastered the flames and could carry his insensible wife to her bed. His own hands and face were burned, but he knew it not. His suffering was all for the agonised woman, who came but too soon to the knowledge of the intolerable pain she was enduring. In fifteen minutes there were half a dozen physicians at her side, and she was told that her life depended upon her self-control and resistance to the shock she had received.

Fortunately Steve's injuries were but surface burns; but it was an awful night in that darkened room where the beautiful Mrs. Lloyd lay moaning in woeful agony the dreadful hours away. The opals had been taken from her scorched throat, and the magnificent dress was now only a mass of burned and torn fragments.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

But the ball of which she was to have been the particular star went blithely on. The news of the event spread rapidly, and most of the dancers were well aware of the tragedy. They talked about it in whispers for a few moments. They said "Poor Mrs. Lloyd!" and they waltzed till daybreak at the ball for the Princess Kara.

CHAPTER XV

COMING BACK

THERE was now no question of Steve's going to Europe for his mother and sister. They left their pictures, bronzes, china, etc., etc., in proper storage and returned at once to America. But they were not able to give either sympathy or assistance, as Jessie positively refused to see any one but her husband and her hired nurses. Her fate hung for two weeks in a balance that the smallest trifle might turn to the grave; but her extreme physical suffering probably saved her life. For pain is a great conservator of nervous strength. It draws the scattered life forces all to the centre of being, and rallies them for a last desperate effort for existence. In Jessie's case, at least, this was the result finally attained; but her convalescence was delayed by a very severe attack of fever.

So that chamber of luxury and beauty in which she had dressed herself so magnificently for admiration and for triumph, became for weeks and months a place of almost inconceivable sorrow and suffering. Ah, if life could

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

throw open to us beforehand its long suites of chambers; if from some secret station we could see the halls of tragedy and the rooms of retribution we should have to inhabit,—how terribly the anticipation would haunt us! But there is instead the blessed certainty that God reserves calamities in his own hand to inflict them in due season, and that he never tortures us in advance of the due season.

It was a terrible summer; but Steve bore it with a love and patience that was almost divine. No fretfulness, no unreasonableness moved him to anger. His voice was ever the voice of tender pity and affection. His touch was gentle as a mother's, and deft and easy as that of a man strong to lift and to bear. Through the long, hot days and the sultry nights he sat at her side and ministered to her smallest want. Only while she slept did he leave her for such rest or refreshment as he could obtain in those precious moments. And he did not lose heart because at first she seemed unmindful of his devotion. He remembered that bodily pain is the most exacting of feelings, and he hoped for the hours of rest which were coming. At length, one night, God sent a messenger to her. It was a close, heavy night, with not a breath of air to stir the lace draperies of the mournful room. The nurse was asleep on the sofa. Steve sat by

COMING BACK

the bedside watching his wife. The fever had been at its height, and left her wan and weak, and almost beyond hope. As Steve looked at her still face he doubted whether she lived or not. If she breathed it was not perceptible to his senses. He knelt down and, holding her hand, prayed inwardly for her soul.

Slowly she opened her eyes wide and looked long and solemnly at him. He returned her gaze with one brimming over with love and pity, but he did not speak. He thought it was her last farewell, and he would not break that sacred pause with speech. He answered her soul with his soul. She closed her eyes, and then reopened them. "Steve," she whispered, and he bent his ear close to her lips, "Steve, I am going to live; God has promised me."

When she was stronger she spoke again of this promise. It was on one Sabbath evening, while the bells were ringing for church, and the avenue was very quiet. "I was at the verge of life, Steve," she said. "I stood on the outermost shelf of a black barrier of rocks, and a great abyss of motionless water was below. A rushing wind pushed me closer and closer to the edge. I was almost over. Then I heard a voice crying to me: 'Soul! Soul! What is passing in thee now?' And I answered: 'I fear to die.' And the voice said: 'Thou shalt



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

not die, but live;' and my soul was naked and terrified, and I cried out: 'Cover me with Thy mercy, Lord Christ!' Then a deep sleep wrapped me round, and when I opened my eyes I saw you kneeling by my side, and I knew that I had come back to you, Steve."

In many respects she came back a changed woman, though conversion was a slow and tardy miracle in Jessie's case. To some souls God says a word, and they know His sensible Presence and feel the shining of His face on them ever after; but with others assurance and obedience is the fruit of sorrow, and pain, and bitter inquietude. Jessie had to stand upon that isthmus which commands the councils of both worlds, ere she felt through all her fleshly dress

Bright shoots of everlastingness.

She had to come under that "over-belief" which we call the supernatural; a thing to be revered, and not mocked at, since at the base of the highest spiritual faculty lies always the supernatural element. She had to accept a lesson that humbled her to the dust and shook her like a tempest, but which also exalted her to the clouds and steadied her like a frost. Never before this experience had her love conferred happiness, for she had never

COMING BACK

sacrificed anything for those she loved; but now she spent the days of her convalescence in making plans which rested, not on her own happiness, but on the pleasure of others.

The first symptom of this change was seen in her conduct toward Mrs. Lloyd and Alice. When they returned from Europe and found that their service would not be accepted, they retired to Lloyd Park and waited there for the issue of events. Steve could find no time to visit them, but John went frequently. At first he took only messages from Steve; but the day came when Jessie also remembered and thanked them for their haste to help, and their consideration and patience under her refusal to accept the sympathy they offered.

About the end of September it was found possible to move Jessie to a beautiful country home which Steve had bought for her. She was even then painfully lame, and the bright beauty of her face had undergone the flame, and not yet outgrown its shrivelling influence. But her suffering had taught her many priceless lessons, and among them the value of a good man's love. All her vague contempt for Steve was turned into a kind of reverence. She remembered her unkindnesses to him, her carelessness of his comfort, her indifference to his desires, with a remorse she could not lock out

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

of her heart. She understood when too late that he had given her everything to make her happy, and that these rich gifts had only made her selfish. Yes, she was forced to admit that in married life a sin against love is as heinous as a sin against fidelity.

And oh, how delightful was that day when she could at last escape from that sorrowful house, whose every room held bitter memories and inaudible echoes of suffering. In it Steve's father had stumbled along a dark and dreary road to find his grave, and in its splendid chambers she had gone to the very gates of hell. Only when she had passed out of its wide portals did she feel as if her sentence of suffering had been fully reversed. And how fair was the roomy house to which Steve carried her! It was in the midst of fine gardens, and eastward it looked over the ocean. As she approached it her little son and daughter, who had been many weeks there, came running to meet her with all the joyful abandon of their childhood. Her mother and her blind father stood in the doorway to welcome her, and Mrs. Lloyd and Alice took her to their hearts as they had never before been able to do. Every soul, indeed, that had walked with her to the shoal of life, rejoiced to have her back again. They had bought her with the great price of

COMING BACK

their prayers and watching; and they loved her because they had prayed for her.

What she said to all whose love she had wronged and slighted was for God to hear. Between her and the pardoning Christ it was a confidential, perhaps a speechless confession; and on her mother's breast, and folded in her father's arms, there was no need for many words between their hearts and Jessie's. John, she had already seen often, and he had long ago forgiven her, both for Steve's wrongs and his own. He joined the family party in the evening, and then Jessie was not long in discovering that there was a very sweet understanding between Alice and her brother. It had been growing all summer. Old love is a dangerous thing to touch. It flames at a glance, and John and Alice had not escaped, nor even desired to escape, this danger. While Jessie lay so ill, though there had been a tender renewal of their interest in each other, there had been no explanations.

There are strong and inscrutable ties that unite, without our seeing how or when, and John's words were not all of their intercourse. For though he said nothing of love, but "dear Alice," his glance prolonged the impression of the simple address, and went where speech could not reach.

To take the heart by surprise, — oh, this is

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

the way of love! There had been no intention in John's mind of speaking to Alice on that day. He thought it was yet too early, but when the hour arrives, the deed set for it is always accomplished. She came into the room just after John's arrival, and her presence affected him with an indescribable delight. Her easy, dignified manner had in it something maidenly, impossible to be described, and as she passed John, the air seemed to imbibe that fragrance it does from a swaying flower. He rose to meet her, and she looked at him with eyes of a religious purity and a sunshine on her face that came from a far sunnier glow within.

He was suddenly impatient to know his fate. He asked her to walk in the garden with him, and she went, though she knew well what he was going to say to her. She only wondered that he had not spoken before. Silently, hand in hand, they strolled to the outermost wall, and leaning over it, watched the sea, and listened to its voice among the rocks—deep and melancholy as a page out of Beethoven. The air around them held a caress of scent; their eyes met; their fingers touched, and John said, as he interlaced them:—

"This little white, warm hand—give it to me! I love you, Alice! If you will be my

COMING BACK

wife, I will love you more and more, as long as I live!"

And Alice answered:—

"I love you, John! I have loved you ever since we met. I will be your wife."

These were all the words they said. Their feeling was too deep and too sincere to need superfluities. It was an hour of perfect understanding and perfect bliss, and they lengthened it until the shadows fell coldly upon them, and the lights shone in the windows of the house, and they knew that inquiry must soon be made for them. Then they went into the midst of the gathered family, and John told the story there was no need to tell. It had been guessed by every one, and every one was glad in its promise and happiness. Suddenly Steve spoke.

"There is one thing, John," he said, "one thing to be greatly desired, and that is that you should be married immediately and live happy ever afterwards. I think you had better look to this end, and at once; for Alice's fate has a trick of breaking off her marriage."

The words were said in jest, but taken up very seriously. There was indeed no necessity for delay, and many reasons for not delaying. The principal one was a purpose in Steve's mind of taking a long sea journey. His health had been much impaired by his terrible vigil.



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

It was imperative that he should have an absolute change, and the strength of that solitude and sequestration which was his soul's native air. The woods and the sea called him with a voice that he could not deny. They called him whether he was sleeping or waking, and he fretted and pined like a wild bird in a cage for the freedom they only could give him.

Jessie had been the first to urge this change, but when once it was spoken of, every one who knew and loved Steve recognised its wisdom. So it had come to be an understood thing that as soon as the winter was over, Steve should go round the world in such leisurely fashion as might occupy a twelvemonth if he so wished. Therefore it was quite natural that John should object to a delay so unnecessary. And when lovers have a point to carry, they generally succeed in carrying it. At any rate, John did. He was of course supported by Steve, and not seriously opposed by either Mrs. Lloyd or Alice. So the bliss that he had not dared to hope for came by patient waiting, and one bright morning, just before Christmas, Alice Lloyd became the bride of John and happiness.

Early in the following spring, Steve began to prepare for the voyage his soul desired. He and John had many long conferences, and John was much astonished at the care and thought-

COMING BACK

fulness for the future the usually careless Steve manifested. He made some remark about this peculiarity, and Steve answered: —

"I am not sure that I shall ever come back home again, John. I wish above all things the continuance and prosperity of the charities we have begun to be assured and placed beyond dispute. It is 'right also that my own affairs should be put in such shape that Jessie may not have a single anxiety about money matters — or the future."

"What makes you have any doubts about your return home? Have you had any presentiment of death? If so, do not leave New York."

"My death is in the hands of Him who is as much in one place as another, and I am constrained to go. The thought of freedom has become a passion that I cannot control — that I do not desire to control. Only Jessie could keep me here, and Jessie is perfectly willing that I should have that respite from conventional life which is now an imperative demand of my nature. I want liberty. I want to be free. I want it so much that I think the whole world will be too small for my craving. Only eternity can satisfy it. Why, John, if I say but the word 'freedom' my whole nature sings to it."



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"A desire so imperative is more than a desire; it is a command, Steve."

"I think so, John."

"Then God go with you!"

"I shall not get beyond His guiding and preserving hand."

So the preparations for his journey went steadily forward, and at length the time fixed for Steve's departure arrived. On the night before it, John and he sat together, long after the household were asleep. Steve had been very quiet and thoughtful all the previous week, for grave and momentous questions, relating to the future of his family and his many benevolent enterprises, had been constantly occupying his mind. John, however, understood his friend—at least he understood that Steve had a great nature, never quite at home on this earth. He was at best an exile with the "homing" passion stronger than any lure that this life could offer him. Indeed, Steve himself was frequently aware of being something of an enigma even to those who loved him best. He had thoughts and feelings often about which he did not care to speak. That very night, as he had stood with his family watching the sun set, and listening to their remarks about the beauty of the scene, he had been intensely conscious of what others had not been conscious of. For even to

COMING BACK

John the setting sun was only a yellow disk, disappearing in a purple and golden glory, but to Steve the heavens had been opened, and he had seen a vision in those marvellously tinted clouds, of dazzling temples and the crowded pinions of cherubims, and the multitude no man can number. And this vision, though seen "through a glass darkly," had made him homesick and silent, because he feared to be misunderstood.

"What are you thinking about, Steve?" at length asked John. "Are you quite satisfied with the arrangements made for carrying on the work in your absence?"

"Yes—and no. Ought I to leave the whole weight on your shoulders, while I seek my own health and happiness?"

"But while you are seeking your own, you will find for others. You intend, do you not, to examine the charities of the great European cities, in order to adopt any really good idea?"

"I do. And I shall keep you posted, John; for if I find a good thing, you must carry it forward at once. No need to wait for my return. And, by-the-bye, I was through a State Institution for the Insane yesterday, and I noticed over all the doors of every department this admirable motto: 'Put yourself in his place.' John, the best of stewards, the



THE KING'S HIGHWAY

most faithful of philanthropic workers, needs such a reminder constantly. Would the men and women we have put in charge be any worse for such a noble order ever before their eyes?"

"I think they would be much better. It would help us, every one. Say that an unemployed working-man came for money to go to Pittsburg, would he not be likely to get it, more kindly and cheerfully, if our agent 'put himself in the man's place?' I am sure he would. And the same result would follow in all the branches of 'The King's Highway Fund.'"

"The Unemployed Workman! Oh, John, he is as great a tragedy as Hamlet or the *Œdipus*. How is the Land Scheme going on?"

"Not so rapidly as I could wish. Men do not want to take the least obligation, and men who do not want to take an obligation so easy, and so self-respecting as you have made it, are not the men who will build up cities in the wilderness, and make the desert blossom as the rose. If you gave them the land absolutely, without pay, or even promise to pay, they would not value it, or cultivate it—yet, that is what the majority want."

"I know," said Steve, with a smile as sad as it was merry—

COMING BACK

"Divide the land among the people,
And give it them quite scot free;
To Bridget ten acres, to Pat ten pole,
And a thousand to Mrs. O'Shea.
Answer me now and say."

What would they do with it, John?"

"Sell it for as much cash as they could get. Still, the settlement is growing; and a good charity must grow; it cannot be manufactured."

"Well, don't get discouraged, John. It is enough for me to have that failing. So often I say to myself, 'How small a space I fill in this great teeming world of labourers! How little I can do! How marred that little is by my ignorance and inefficiency!' And then my soul is weary and hopeless of its work, and only prays to be counted with those worshippers 'who lie before God's altar and are still.'"

"No, no, Steve! It is not our duty to weigh our work or its results. When you feel this spiritual lassitude, then is the time to bid your soul arise and join that nobler band whose worship is not idle, and dumb, and fruitless. Neither you nor I would be happy in the passive joys of contemplation; we want no lotos land of musing, mystical worship; we want the wages of going on and of doing good with every sense we have—or shall have. I ex-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

pect great things from your European investigations."

"You will be disappointed, John. As far as I can read or hear, America is already in the van of charitable Christian work."

"In the van let her always be."

"Yes, in some senses. But the van is not always the best place, because it is not the men who press to the van who are the most reliable and serviceable. Now I should always be there with my unsatisfied ideals and longings and my enthusiasms, urging men to impossibilities; but you, John, you are where the leader ought to be—just ahead of the great central force. From there you direct those that are too impetuous, and draw on those who have become weary."

"John," continued Steve, "this very afternoon I got a new idea, and whatever comes or goes, it is to be carried out. No man is better fitted to carry it out than you are, and I am much amazed you have not long ago suggested it to me."

"What is, then, this new idea that I ought to have suggested long ago?"

"I want us to own and publish a newspaper — a good paper that will represent God and the people. I want a paper that can go where the preacher cannot go. Have you considered

COMING BACK

what a power a few sheets of well-filled paper may become? Why, John, there is no earthly, moral power equal to it."

"The preacher —"

"I do not underrate him; but you have to go to the preacher and the paper comes to you. If the weather is stormy and the church is far away, the congregation consider that they must dress for church, and get their best clothes spoiled and a cold perhaps into the bargain. The paper preaches to them at their fireside and in their six-days' coat. The paper permits them to talk back to it. They say to one another as they read it: 'Listen to this, mother,' or 'What do you say to that, father?' They discuss its theology and ethics freely among themselves, and every one feels interested in a sermon they have a share in. Again, the preacher gives us the truth through one man's heart and mind; the paper speaks to us through a great many hearts and minds. The preacher is very much restricted as to subjects; if he goes too far afield, he is afraid to offend; the paper speaks out boldly, and 'stop my paper' won't stop it from speaking the truth. John, we must have a paper. Call it *The King's Highway*, and let it tell us all that is being done on that great thoroughfare — good and bad."

"Have you thought of the expense?"

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"To be sure I have. You know something about publishing a paper. You know what backing it will need. The Lloyd estate is good for it."

"Amen! Now what is to be the spirit of this great paper?"

"It is above all things to be tolerant, and to be the organ of the poor and the needy. It is to speak for the oppressed and the suffering in all lands. If there is a wrong or a sorrow at our antipodes, it is to point out the wrong and comfort and relieve the sorrow, and that without regard to race, creed, or colour."

"Amen! What else?"

"Give the people a good sermon and a good, clean love story. Men and women never tire of either."

"A love story?"

"Yes. Old and young read love stories, nor will they ever tire of them until they tire of April's ever-returning mystery of daffodils and crocus buds. Women especially will read love stories; give them pure, sweet tales of home, and home affections, and say a word or two especially for the women, something that has grown out of woman's joy and sorrow and manifold trials and experiences. John, I am astonished we have not thought of this wonder-working paper before!"

COMING BACK

"So am I. Now about the price, Steve?"

"Make it so good that every one must have it, but so cheap that every one can pay for it."

"You will lose money—lots of it in that way."

"The same thing was said when cheap postage was proposed, but cheap postage has not yet ruined the Government. But suppose I lost money in this way, it would not be lost. No, sir! It would be money out at the best interest ever humanity pays."

"Is it to advocate any special creed?"

"God forbid. Unless it could show to all mankind how every cause and creed might be combined by love:

'Yet not forget
The fountain whence they rose;
As filled with many a rivulet.
The lordly Hudson flows.'

Steve was by this time in a fever of enthusiastic foreseeing. He would hear of no such word as "failure," and when John reminded him of the large sums already disbursed and the large sums necessary for carrying on all his plans, Steve was in no way disconcerted.

"I have to give for two," he said, "for I am sure if my father could come and speak to me now, he would say, 'Pay all that I owe to the

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

poor, Steve. Pay it with both hands.' I have five millions left, and you tell me it is increasing. I cannot use it myself. My wife and children cannot use it. Do you want me to bury it in a napkin, and add dollar to dollar, until its very weight will sink me to the lowest hell?"

"God forbid, Steve."

"Then help me to do good with it, John."

"Have you fully told me all your mind? Is there no lingering wish or even fear?"

"I was wondering to-day if we had given prominence enough to the Locomotion Fund. I am sure, John, that speedy locomotion for the unemployed is as necessary as hospitals for the sick."

"I think you are right. I will have more said about it."

"Get the paper to talk as quickly as you can."

"I will. Anything else? You know we may not have an opportunity for this discussion in many months."

"We may never have another opportunity. I have been much struck with the power of music and song over those poor fellows in the Bowery Mission. Into all our charities, John, get as much music as you can—psalms and hymns and holy songs. I think myself, that even in heaven, King David must remember

COMING BACK

'The Lord is my Shepherd,' and be happier for having sung it."

He rose as he spoke, and John rose, and the two men went to the window and looked out over the tossing ocean. There were tears in both their eyes, and Steve passed his arm round John's neck, and John looked into his friend's bright, eager face, and then broke quite down.

"Oh, Steve! Steve!" he cried; "don't go away! don't go! I cannot bear to lose you! Oh, my friend! my dear, dear brother!"

And Steve embraced him, and with great emotion said softly, "I am so glad to hear you speak thus, John. I knew you felt it, but oh, it is good to hear it said. I wish men were more often able to throw aside all restraint, and say the kind and noble things they feel." And then both remembered at the same moment the same words, and smiling, said them softly together, —

"O God! That men would draw a little nearer
To one another! They'd be nearer thee;
And understood."

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CHAPTER XVI

"THY KINGDOM COME"

BEFORE noon next day, Steve was out on the sea, and his family had to take up their life and order it to his absence. That sense of the irrevocable which always depresses those whom the ocean sunders, paralysed the day of parting. No one could do anything, yet all made it a point of honour to affect a feeling of pleasure in Steve's holiday. Even Jessie bravely fought back tears, and showed Steve a parting face radiant with smiles. But in spite of this assumed satisfaction — perhaps because of it — the reaction was a definite depression. It was the middle of the week, but John could not buckle to work, and the whole family went back with Jessie, and gave the day up to conversation and speculations about Steve.

The first two weeks were the hardest. After they were over, letters began to come with an unexpected regularity, and the lassitude of regret grew rapidly into an enthusiasm of expectation. Every one wished to do something great and unusual before Steve's return.

THY KINGDOM COME

Jessie resolved to build some additions to the house, and to make her flower-garden a wonder and a delight. When Steve came back it should be to a home that would make him forget all other homes, — a home such as she had heard him long for, with rooms large, sunny, and airy, and without too much furniture in them, and a garden full of solitary walks, redolent with fruits and flowers and musical with bees and birds. She recalled all his desires, and was determined to bring them to pass.

John had the paper on his mind. There was plenty of journalist talent in New York, and money enough to buy it, and in three weeks *The King's Highway* was reflecting on paper the work done, and to be done, in order to drive Apollyon off the great thoroughfare, and prepare it for the coming of the Lord of Hosts. Steve was sitting at breakfast one morning in the Salutation Inn, at Ambleside, when the first number came to him. He was so proud of it that he could not eat another mouthful, and instead of loitering in the lovely land a week or two, as he had intended, he was moved to go at once to Glasgow and Edinburgh, to see what material he could find worthy of its pages.

But, after all, his own forecast was in the main only too true. Go where he would, he

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

was dashed by the spirit of rigid economy observable in all European charities. It seemed to him that they had to pay, and that their service was chilled and cramped by this necessity. In all his letters to John he magnified the charities of his own country. Putting them against those of older lands, he felt compelled to admit that they had nothing to learn in theories, and a great deal to teach in a generous rendering of theories.

"I find," he wrote, "that charitable houses are hard to enter, and when the barriers are surmounted, I have only a sense of pity and disappointment. In some respects, I think the criminals of Europe are better cared for than the poor. And I have come to the conclusion, John, that the charities of any land should be indigenous, should spring from its special conditions and necessities. I think you and I could go through Europe and not find many ideas worth appropriating; but, John, we could not go through the streets of New York with our eyes and ears open and not find more good roads for charity than we could possibly occupy."

No amount of experience led him very far from this estimate. He spent some time in Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Italy, after leaving England, but was only impressed with

THY KINGDOM COME

the bitterness of the poverty they had to struggle with, and the inefficiency of their resources for such a struggle. Asia saddened him still more. "Who is sufficient for such widespread misery?" he asked despairingly. Finally, he resolved to return to his own vineyard, and make it the centre of his labours and interests,—"beginning first at Jerusalem"—that is, at New York,—and yet not forgetting those whom it was possible to help from New York.

Alternating with his charitable investigations had been many sweet retirements into that solitude he loved. The lonely corries and mountains of Scotland, the hidden valleys of Norway, the deserts of Egypt, the isolated stations of India, and the flowery gardens of Japan, had all given him some sweet, secret place of retreat. In these experiences his soul grew to the perfect stature of the sons of God; for dear as solitude was to him, he still heard in it the low, sad music of humanity, and thus he rose from the plane of "what shall I do to be saved?" to the far nobler one of "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? What is it that thou requirest of me?"

And one day, while sitting in a very elysium of beauty and sweetness near Tokio, he suddenly felt that he must arise from this sensuous

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

dream and go forward. Where to, and for what purpose, he knew not, only that his days of rest were over. Then he started for San Francisco immediately, and as soon as he felt the stress of civilisation round him, rose to its spirit. A telegram to Jessie was his first thought, and he found the possibility of telegrams and railways to be pleasant.

This telegram brought a new life into Steve's home; the glad news of his speedy return rang through the house and grounds, and stirred every one to labour and delight. How eagerly then Jessie watched for the letter sure to follow the telegram! It came as quickly as possible, every word in it glowing with love and expectation.

"I would take the first train home, my dear one," Steve wrote, "but there are three or four people in this vicinity I ought to see. They helped me in my poverty, and nursed me when I was sick and homeless. I may never get so far West again, and at any rate, dear wife, I could not come here and not remember them. And alas! I have already heard that one good woman needs my remembrance sorely. Since she watched me through a severe fever, her husband has died, and she is now making a hard struggle to find bread for her children. But oh, Jessie, my darling, after the joy of gratitude, the joy of seeing you! The joy of

THY KINGDOM COME

the children! The joy of home and work and friends! I am so happy, I cannot say how happy I am!"

And Jessie was not much disappointed at the delay. "It is just like Steve," she said, between laughing and crying, "and Steve is right, is he not, John?"

"I am sure he is, Jessie," answered John. "Steve may never be in San Francisco again, and it would wound these old friends if he did not call on them. And if they need his help, the sooner help is given, the more welcome and gracious. At the very longest, Steve should be home in nine or ten days."

Everything in life now worked to that happy expectation. In nine or ten days Steve would be home. The spring was in all its glory, the shrubs just budding, the tulips and daffodils getting ready to blow open, and in nine or ten days the fruit-trees would be like great white bridal bouquets of blossoms. Jessie was satisfied with the garden, and she went through her house, room by room, adding a touch of colour, hanging a picture in a better light, filling the vases with fresh flowers (for in her heart she expected Steve much earlier than John said), and watching the children lest they should do anything which might mar the spotless beauty of their appearance.

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Neither did she neglect herself. She desired, as every good wife does desire, to be fair in her husband's eyes, and there were still some traces of that terrible ordeal by fire that she had undergone. Her fine colouring had never returned, and perhaps never would, and she was yet a little lame, and perhaps always would be so; but apart from these drawbacks she was a handsome woman. True religion makes women handsome, for nothing is surer than that a lovely soul illuminates and makes beautiful the body it dwells in. Jessie also knew the value of becoming costumes, and her fresh spring toilets of green and white, with little suggestions of amber or pink, carried out that symphony of colour in which Nature had clothed the whole world around her.

In Jessie's heart there was a faint disappointment, when on the evening of the eighth day Steve did not appear. But she was far from acknowledging it. Steve's last letter to her had said he might leave on the following day, and so he could have reached home. But he did not, and there was no letter or telegram to explain the delay. Two more days passed to the same disappointment and silence. Jessie was now angry, and a little fearful, the more so as John came out to ask her if she had received any word from Steve. He affected a cheerful

THY KINGDOM COME

confidence in "all being right," but Jessie had a sickening dread that something was wrong.

The dread grew and spread. Mrs. Lloyd and Alice came to inquire of Jessie the next day, and John, now really anxious, followed them. He cautiously admitted that Steve might be sick, and he thought some telegraphing ought to be done, if it were only to satisfy themselves that there was nothing seriously wrong, and as all urged this method of relief, John immediately put it in practice. The hotel from which Steve had written was first interrogated, and the answer was perplexing. "Mr. Lloyd was here for four days. His trunks are still here and await orders." A great terror spread swiftly from heart to heart. Telegrams flew to and from every station on the route home, but no information was obtained. Then John went West to make such search as love and gold could make.

In the mean time, Jessie was nearly frantic with a thousand fears. She tried to pray and could not. She had made John promise if he found Steve sick, to telegraph for her; and she walked restlessly about the room, with her bonnet and cloak lying on the table, ready to start for her husband's side at a moment's notice. But John could not find a trace of Steve. At the hotel he was well remembered, but from the

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

moment he passed out of its doors, no sign of him could be discovered. Fear deepened into despair, and the awful silence of uncertainty and suspense nearly broke their hearts.

Fortunately there were late photographs of Steve, and John gave these to men who were familiar with the country, and lavished gold in searching every foot of ground in the city and in the adjacent towns and villages. Nothing came of the quest, and finally John was compelled to return home. Still, he would not give up hope. He reminded Jessie of Steve's erratic impulses to seclusion, and of that habit he had of sinking his identity in some workmanlike disguise; and he thought it probable that he had done so in order to visit his old friends, and that while in this condition, he had fallen sick in some out-of-the-way place, unable to communicate with his friends.

But even this hope died as weeks and months went by, and no word or token came from the lost man. Jessie utterly succumbed to the long strain of suspense and despair. She lay prostrate and speechless, while forgotten days and forgotten opportunities of loving-kindness called to her in sad, remorseful repenting. Oh, if just once more she could hear Steve's strong rapid step coming towards her! If just once more she could see him open the door, and look at

THY KINGDOM COME

her with his smile so full of love and truth! Only once! Only once, that she might tell him how dearly she loved, how sorry she was that she had ever grieved or undervalued him! For now bygone hours tortured her. They showed her what they had expected from her, and what they would have given her. And it was too late! Steve's face, as she had often seen it, with a longing disappointed look, haunted her desolate heart. He would come back no more. She had deceived his hopes so often, and now death in some form or other had taken him away for ever! She recalled times when she might have made him so happy, and she had doled him out the poorest kind of compensation. She remembered times when she had profited by his generosity, only to protect her own selfishness. He had loved her, and she had wounded him cruelly. Twice she had made him weep. Certain words she had said, certain looks she had given, secret forgotten unkindnesses all at once became alive, and all said to her, "Too late! Too late!" Alas! the irreparable has this magic freshness, and the soul compelled to remember the love it has wasted and wounded, suffers from such refinements of tenderness real heart-rending. One hour, Jessie prayed for. One hour of the many hours in which she had made Steve un-

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

happy. Only one hour, to tell him how sorry she was, to ask his forgiveness, and kiss her pardon from his lips. No! No! Neither to-day, nor to-morrow, nor throughout eternity, would she find one of the many hours she had spent in making miserable the heart that loved her so truly and so unselfishly.

Thus, full of wretched remorse and anxiety, the months went by, and it was again spring. Then one day a dark, rough-looking man entered John's office. He sat down in a chair opposite him, and, looking calmly into John's face, said: —

"I was with him to the end. I saw everything. I heard the last words he spoke."

"You mean Mr. Lloyd?" asked John, looking at his visitor with sorrowful fear.

"I mean the man I called Steve. He called himself 'Steve.' Sandy McLaurin of San Francisco told me you wanted to find him. Well, you can't find him, and I am glad of it. He is far beyond the law and the lawyers. He is at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, and he is better there than in your clutches,—and more, I would n't believe Steve ever did anything wrong, not if you swore yourself black and blue over it."

"Stop, my friend!"

"I am Steve's friend, not yours."

THY KINGDOM COME

"I am Steve's friend. I am also his brother."

"Oh! that's it!"

"If you believe that Steve Lloyd is wanted for anything but love and honour, you are much mistaken. And if you are telling me that Steve is dead, thinking to lead me on a wrong scent, let me tell you, it is a great cruelty. His mother and wife and sister and children and I, myself, still keep a hope of his return. Do not for God's sake kill that hope, unless you have sure and certain knowledge of his death."

"I have."

"What is it?"

"I saw him die."

"Where? How?"

"I'll tell you. I met Steve when I was second engineer on the 'Alaska.' We were mates and friends, and I loved him. Who could help loving him? I don't take to people in general, but I took to Steve, and I loved him. It is no matter to you what fortune took me to 'Frisco, but I was there looking for a job, when one morning I saw Steve on the street, and he was so bright and handsome that I could not help but say, 'God bless you, Steve! I'm out of luck and very shabby, and you need n't speak to me; but I am glad to see you looking like the gentleman you are and always were.' Well, sir, if I'd been the richest man and the greatest man in

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

the world, Steve could n't have been more set up to meet me. He asked me where I was staying, and I said at Sandy McLaurin's, and he said, well, then he'd stay there, too. We talked a bit, and then agreed to meet at Sandy's for supper at six o'clock, and I never thought for a moment that he was going to quit the first hotel in the place to come to me."

"Stay. Do you remember the date of this meeting?"

"To be sure. It was on May the sixth of last year."

"Yes," said John, sadly; "the proprietor told me that he paid his bill on the afternoon of the sixth, and said he would come for his trunks later."

"Well, sir, he intended to do so, no doubt; but just after I left Steve, the captain of a coast steamer stopped me, and asked if I would run his engines down the water about thirty miles the next day. He was going to take a party of women and children on a picnic to some big orange grove. I said I would go, and I begged Steve to come with me; and I begged him so hard that he finally consented, though I could see he did n't want to go. And he told me he intended taking the ten o'clock train at night for the East, but I assured him we would be back by eight at the latest, and so he would

THY KINGDOM COME

have two hours to come and go on. He thought it would be enough, and so went with me."

"Do you remember the name of the place?"

"San Justa; but it is nothing of a place, only some big gardens and a grove and a few houses. All went well enough; the women had tea-parties under the trees, and the children ate fruit and danced and played; but the captain spent the day in a drinking-house, and when he came aboard he was reckless and quarrelsome. There was a full moon though, and it was light as day, yet I felt in myself that something was going to happen. I told Steve so, and asked him to keep the captain in sight. Half an hour afterwards a big steamer struck us, and went straight ahead."

"But she stopped to see what damage she had done?"

"No, she did n't, and I can't blame her much. She was badly hurt herself, and our captain gave her such blaspheming ill words as were not fit to get help with; and very likely they thought if we needed help we would have found decent language to say so. Anyway, we were left alone, and I knew what was coming. I went on deck, and the first thing I saw was the cowardly captain and crew putting off in a boat, and Steve standing by the gunwale, with an iron

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

bar in his hand, threatening to brain any man who got into a boat while there was a woman or a child to save. I saw him standing on the sloping deck of the fast-sinking ship, helping them into the boats, while the water rose to his knees—and higher—and higher—but he got every woman and child safely off; and he went down with a blessing on his lips."

Both men were weeping, and John could not utter a word. The stranger continued, "I had stood by him and helped him all I could, and he saw me in the water just as he was sinking, and he called out: 'Good-bye, David! God help, and save, and bless'—that is all. But it is enough to comfort you, I hope." Then seeing John take out his check book, he added, "Stop that. I heard about the reward, but I wouldn't touch a penny for nothing in the world."

"Take your expenses at any rate."

"I will not. I was coming to New York on my own affairs. While Steve was living I would have done anything for him heart and hands could do free and welcome. It is n't likely I'll pocket money for a kindness to the dead. What do you take me for? I am sorry enough for those who loved him, but he died a good death. No man could die better than Steve did. Tell them that; and good-bye, sir!"

THY KINGDOM COME

Then John sat still with his eyes covered, but seeing the whole tragedy. He understood the situation,—the strong arm which would work miracles of salvation, the kind encouragement to the weak, the sunny trust that at the last moment could pray for help for another rather than for himself,—and he could weep no longer. He thought of his friend as knocking all his life long at a door not opened—longing and wistfully watching—and then suddenly—a door opened into heaven, and a voice heard saying, "Come up hither." No, he could not weep for Steve. The long yearning of his heart for freedom was stilled. His soul had slipped the bonds of its incarnation. Steve was for ever among the Freedmen of God.

So the agony of the long waiting was at last over; the grief not sure was now certain. And in spite of his grief he found grace to say, "Thank God for a death so noble!" It was best now that all who loved Steve should know the truth. He went out at once to Jessie's home and found Mrs. Lloyd and Alice sitting with her. She had not been expecting John, and the moment he entered she divined the news he brought.

"What is it, John?" she asked in a whisper. "Is Steve dead?"

"Steve is alive for ever!"

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

Then sitting down by the three women, and mingling his tears with theirs, John told the story of Steve's heroic death. "He gave his life a ransom for many lives, for the helpless women and children who would have been left to perish if Steve had not stood at the sinking gunwale for them. There is nothing to weep for in such a death;" and yet John bowed his head and wept bitterly.

Then a marvellous thing took place. Jessie, who had been prostrate in a silent despair for weeks, suddenly rose to her feet, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, in a rapture of rejoicing, gave God thanks for Steve's glorious discharge from all the sorrows of mortality. "I can weep no more. There is a better way before me, John," she cried, stretching out her hands to him. "Show me how to stand in Steve's place. You know what good works he planned. I will carry them out and forward. I consecrate my life to this promise. As Steve's wife, I too often failed; as Steve's widow I will pay to the poor, as long as I live, the debt of love I owe him. Steve, I know, has left me all he possessed. I give with all my heart one million dollars of it as a thank-offering to God for the love he gave, and for the love he has taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord!"

THY KINGDOM COME

"Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Ah! there are joys and triumphs for those who submit. With heart crushed, and on the very borders of despair, Jessie found strength to say, "Thy will be done," and in that moment the song of the redeemed who trust in the Lord made her glad. From weeping she turned to work, from the thought of herself and her own sorrow to the thought of others and the sorrows of others. In as far as possible she took Steve's place in the labours of *The King's Highway*. Money she gave with a liberal hand; and not only money, but time, strength, influence, and life. Many charities, never heard of before, flow this day—like an unseen stream among the meadows—from her heart and hands,—charities having for their object the nameless, little-regarded trials of wifehood and motherhood and girlhood.

At first she worked with the thought of Steve in her soul; but she soon rose higher, to the thought of God; and though sometimes discouraged, when every other anchor drags, the thought of God steadies her wavering heart. Greatly strengthened and helped by Mrs. Lloyd and Alice, who stand at her right hand and her left, the three women are constantly busy, preparing the way of the Lord, and lifting up the gates of holiness, so that the King of Glory

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THE KING'S HIGHWAY

may come in, and abide in our cities, and fill the whole land with righteousness, and peace, and contentment.

This good day is coming! Coming in spite of all oppositions and discouragements. The work Steve and John began goes silently and steadily forward. The two millions soon became too little for its necessities, and Mrs. Lloyd and Alice and many others have added to the fund. The high places of sin are being broken down, and the rough places of suffering smoothed and bridged over; and the day of the Lord is at hand! John knows it, and he neither wearies nor falters in well-doing. God inspires him, and humanity inspires him; and if his heart ever fails him for a moment, he has but to cast his eyes upward and around. For all around — over the hearth and on the lintels of the door, circling the seal of their work, and on the margin of every paper, is the grand prophetic motto Steve chose for it: "*Thy Kingdom Come.*" It is even carved on the frame of the exquisite portrait of Steve which Mrs. Lloyd has given to the office of the charities he founded; and John has but to gaze on that radiant face to catch virtue from it. Often he whispers as he stands before it: —

"Steve! You have been a pillar of fire to me! Still I can hear you say, 'Be strong, John,

THY KINGDOM COME

be strong, and again, be strong!' Oh, brave, kind soul, by what shore tarriest thou now?

'In some far shining sphere
Conscious or not of the past—
Still thou performest the Word
Of the Spirit in whom thou didst live.'"

And to this joyful certainty all who love Steve still work, having in their hearts a sure and certain hope that he "in some far shining sphere" is working with them in the great end towards which all creation travaileth together —

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in Heaven.

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